

Evil, Theodicy, and Jewishness in Fridrikh Gorenshtein

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“The man whom the Jew lauds is not a saint,
not a resignee: it is the just man.”

—Bernard Lazare¹

Fridrikh Gorenshtein’s is a broken and fallen world: cold, dark, damp, windy, smelly, overcrowded, and lonely. It is a world that often erupts in scandal and almost always teeters on its verge. It is degrading in its unresponsiveness to basic human needs and lack of simplest comforts. It is a world pervaded with everyday cruelty and corruption, where disembodied voices speak casually to strangers about grotesque violence they witnessed or perpetrated (“Kucha,” *Poputchiki*) and where human remains keep rising to earth’s surface to remind the living of unexpiated past (*Mesto, Iskuplenie*, “Kucha”).

It is a world that is out of balance, as is, critics suggested, Gorenshtein’s artistic vision. In his disdainful 1992 review of the recently published *Psalm*, a 1978 novel that depicts a forty-year span of Soviet history and that centers on the Antichrist—Christ’s brother and God’s emissary, sent to live, unrecognized, among Soviet citizens—Victor Erofeev likened Gorenshtein’s writing to “petrified shit.” Erofeev was as scornful of what he saw as Gorenshtein’s heavy-handed and crude philosophizing as of his returns from philosophical abstractions to the realities of “‘desolate’ life.” Erofeev’s quotation marks around the folksy “*besprosvetnyi*” implied a degree of manipulateness to Gorenshtein’s vision and mocked its hyperbolic bleakness.² Twenty years later, Erofeev revised his criticism into a deferential tribute.³

In a contemporary review of the same novel, the philosopher and critic Grigory Pomerants also took issue with Gorenshtein’s fixation on the darker side of life. Pomerants opted for the image of *Deva Obidy* (Virgin of Resentment) to capture Gorenshtein’s bitterness. To this bitterness, which Pomerants saw as an effect of Gorenshtein’s myopia, Pomerants contrasted a more encompassing

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1. Bernard Lazare, *Antisemitism: Its History and Causes*, transl. from French (Lincoln, 1995), 143.

2. Viktor Erofeev, “Russkii antisemitizm s tochki zreniia vechnosti” in *Entsiklopediia russkoi dushi; Pupok; Sharovaia molniia* (Moscow, 2015), 502.

3. “Vecher pamiati F. Gorenshteina (3/5),” YouTube video, 14:24, from Dom kino, Moscow, December 9, 2012, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNxwDk2jOJc>

and higher point of view—his own. “Gorenshtein takes for all reality a stratum of life that I did not like to look at directly but saw from a bird’s eye view, from a certain height, from the realm ruled by the Maiden Who Washes Away Resentment (*Deva, Smyvaiushchaia Obidy*.) And he [Gorenshtein] is fully in the kingdom of the Maiden of Resentment.” Even though Gorenshtein spoke many harsh truths about the Russian spirit embodied in the “lumpenized mass,” these are the truths of “a darkened consciousness.”⁴

Responding to his critics and to Pomerants specifically, Gorenshtein identified the “stratum of life” that Pomerants chose not to see simply as evil. The comment, however, goes beyond *Psalm* to offer an illuminating perspective on the whole of Gorenshtein’s corpus. While for many of Gorenshtein’s readers his preoccupation with the bleaker side of life, along with his difficult character and writerly persona, is a result of his difficult biography, Gorenshtein’s unflinching examination of evil should be seen as more than a reflection of a tormented spirit.⁵ In this paper, I suggest that his concern with evil and with defining a proper response to it is central to Gorenshtein’s conception of Jewishness and, especially, to his identity as a Jewish writer working within the Russian literary tradition.

Gorenshtein’s attention to Jewish topics has been noted by many of his readers, even if not all agree on how to interpret it. His representation of Soviet Jewish lives, their dilemmas, crises, and contradictions; his undaunting examination of antisemitism as a virtually inescapable part of the Jewish experience; his efforts to preserve the memory of the Holocaust as it unfolded in the Soviet space; his examination of the recent past through the lens of Biblical prophecies, as if to suggest, in the manner of ancient rabbis, the presence of hidden springs of history at work behind manifest events—these are some of Gorenshtein’s persistent preoccupations. In the eyes of many, these themes make Gorenshtein an important contributor to Russian-Jewish literature, a writer at home, as Simon Markish defined it, both in the Russian and Jewish worlds.

For Markish himself, however, Gorenshtein is hardly an example of such dual vision. Despite his commitment to the Jewish problematic, Gorenshtein has no meaningful connection to Russian Jewish civilization for the simple reason that for the writers of his generation this civilization is all but lost. Gorenshtein is a *bytopisatel’ pustyni*, a chronicler of the near extinction of Jewish life, a steadfast witness to the dejudaization of Soviet Jewry.⁶ To still others, this very record of Jewish depletion and the unflinching portrayal of the psychic wounds it inflicts presents as trafficking in antisemitic tropes and even as evidence of Gorenshtein’s own antisemitism.

None of these approaches, however, offers as fruitful a framework in which to consider Gorenshtein’s ideas about evil—or does justice to the distinctiveness of his overall vision—as the one offered by Marat Grinberg. Grinberg

4. Grigorii Pomerants, “Psalom Antikhrista. O romane Fridrikha Gorenshteina *Psalom* i ne tol’ko o nem.” *Literaturnaia gazeta* 13, (March 25, 1992), 4.

5. For an illuminating first-hand account of Gorenshtein’s life and career see, Mina Polianskaia, “*Ia pisatel’ nezakonnyi*”: *Zapiski i razmyshleniia o sud’be i tvorchestve Fridrikha Gorenshteina* (New York, 2003).

6. Simon Markish, “O Rossiiskom evreistve i ego literature,” in Simon Markish, ed., *Babel’ i drugie* (Moscow, 1997), 206.

rejects Markish's model of binocularity—the simultaneous belonging and fluency in Russian and Jewish cultures—to argue that all significant Jewish writers, including Isaak Babel', Markish's paradigmatic case, had to pay for their participation in the Russian literary tradition by obliterating Jewishness from their writerly image. For Grinberg, Gorenshtein is a rare exception: a significant Russian writer who not only refused to renounce his Jewishness but made it into the cornerstone of his art.⁷ Below, I consider the various figurations of evil in Gorenshtein's writings in light of Grinberg's reading.

Grounded in his unapologetic view of Judaism's theological, philosophical, and ethical primacy over Christianity, Gorenstein's grappling with the problem of evil illustrates vividly his refusal to pay obligatory homage to the long-standing postulates of the Russian literary tradition, while his radical foregrounding of the Jewish experience distinguishes him from the various ways of encrypting or universalizing it even in the works of those Soviet writers who sought to reflect Jewish experience. Central to my discussion will be the notion of theodicy and Gorenshtein's changing ideas about the possibility of religious faith in the face of the world's abiding evil.

“The Whole World Must Be Redeemed”

“Mir dolzhen byt' opravdan ves', chtob mozno bylo zhit'!” This line of Konstantin Bal'mont springs to the mind of Iu, the protagonist of “Champagne with Bile,” a 1986 short story centered on one of Gorenshtein's persistent types: an assimilated and cultured Jewish man, in whom the memory of his Jewish origins survives largely in the form of an ever-present and debasing fear. In Gorenshtein's story, Bal'mont's line marks the culmination of Iu's moral crisis as he comes to a bitter double realization: of the abiding nature of anti-Jewish prejudice that no degree of assimilation is likely to quell, and, still more painfully, of the Jews'—as well as his personal—complicity in their own debasement. Drawn from the poem whose main themes include universal implication in evil and an equally universal need for redemption, Bal'mont's line lays bare the hidden nerve of the story. It also shows that even when not addressed directly, the problem of evil, which Gorenshtein often considers in relation to the Jewish experience, forms a strong undercurrent in his works, rising to the surface in unexpected ways and places, as is the case in “Champagne with Bile.”

Nowhere, however, does evil receive a more sustained and focused elaboration as a metaphysical problem—rather than merely as moral or political—than in his Soviet-period novels *Redemption* and *Psalm*. In both works, Gorenshtein's theological imagination endows empirical evils of history with a metaphysical dimension, even as he keeps a careful watch against romanticizing or abstracting it into a mysterious transcendental. At the same time, his metaphysical searching notwithstanding, evil in Gorenshtein remains earthly in its origins, often mundane, even farcical, and thus all the more terrible. But if *Redemption* both seeks a workable

7. Marat Grinberg, “V drugom izmerenii: Gorenshtein i Babel,” *Slovo* 45 (2005); Marat Grinberg, “Hesped: Piat' let spustia,” *SlovoWord* 54, (2007): no page number, at <https://magazines.gorky.media/slovo/2007/54/gesped-pyat-let-spustya.html>

theodicy and allows for the possibility of divine absence, *Psalm* leaves behind all hesitation in projecting theodic faith.

Evil of a “New Quality”

Redemption takes place in the immediate aftermath of the war—it opens on New Year’s Eve of 1946—in an unnamed town in the recently occupied territories. The plot centers on the main protagonist Sashen’ka, a beautiful but spiteful and vindictive teenager, already skilled at brandishing Soviet discourse as a weapon against her perceived enemies and now learning the ropes of denunciation: she informs on her mother to the authorities out of meanness and envy. Sashen’ka falls in love with August, a young Jewish pilot and war veteran who is briefly visiting his hometown. August has come to give a proper burial to his family—his father, the dentist Leopold L’vovich, his mother, a sixteen-year-old sister, and a five-year-old brother—who had been murdered with a brick, smeared with excrement, and dumped into a sewage pit next to their home by their neighbor, the shoeshine man Shuma. Sashen’ka and August only have a few days together but by the end of the novel, Sashen’ka gives birth to August’s baby, not yet realizing that her beloved has apparently perished, presumably in a plane crash.

Although the young Gorenshtein did not bear personal witness to the destruction of the Jews and although the novel looks back twenty years after the events, *Redemption* belongs among such works of commemoration as those by Ilya Sel’vinsky’s, Vasilii Grossman, Perets Markish, David Bergelson, and others. Like these writers and poets, Gorenshtein responds to Jewish suffering and destruction even as he searches—as did they—for an aesthetic adequate to the task. At the same time, *Redemption* has the benefit of a historical hindsight. The intervening decades, with their anti-Jewish campaigns and the initial suppression of war memory, further clarified the contours of the Soviet cultural policy whose pressures were felt already by Gorenshtein’s predecessors. But in contrast to those earlier writers, who were forced to contend with restrictions on war memorialization, Gorenshtein abandoned all efforts to placate official ideologists.⁸

It is not merely that there is hardly anything about *Redemption* that aligns with the principles of socialist realism either thematically or aesthetically: neither its main protagonist Sashen’ka; nor an utter absence of Soviet triumphalism; nor the peculiar blend of mysticism with physicalism, equally removed from the obligatory mainstream materialism; nor the precariousness of the line between nightmarish visions and reality, no less terrifying than the visions themselves; nor the philosophical digressions; nor the seemingly life-affirming but in fact highly ambivalent ending. Moreover, in its explicit commitment to the Jewish problematic, *Redemption* goes beyond even those earlier narratives of commemoration that in various ways had already defied the official one. In Gorenshtein’s novel, representation of the Jewish

8. For an authoritative discussion of Soviet Jewish writers’ strategies of Holocaust memorialization, see Harriet Murav, *Music from a Speeding Train: Jewish Literature in Post-Revolution Russia* (Stanford, 2013), 111–98.

experience is not encoded within a broader mainstream narrative, as happens, for instance, in Grossman's writings. Nor is there a possibility of conflating the Jewish response with the Soviet one, or of masking one as the other, as is the case in Sel'vinsky. Furthermore, Jews in Gorenstein are restored to the history of the war not only as heroes and victims. Controversially, in the Arendtian fashion, Gorenstein hints at a measure of Jewish responsibility for their own catastrophe, although the elaboration of this idea is postponed until later works.

We may begin with the strikingly literal fashion in which *Redemption* flouts the official policy of universalizing war-time suffering captured in the well-known injunction "Do not divide the dead." The town where the narrative is set is strewn with burial sites, all containing different kinds of human remains. There is a graveyard here, by now virtually levelled, which the Germans improvised for their own needs in a little park beside the Palace of Young Pioneers.⁹ There are the graves of the wounded Soviet soldiers and nurses, killed in an air raid, and buried in a factory square.¹⁰ There is a ravine lined by a makeshift wooden barrier and marked with a plaque indicating a mass grave of "960 Soviet citizens, martyred by the German-fascist invaders," the typical euphemism concealing the fact that most, if not all, of the victims were Jews.¹¹ The former airfield, a near-by village, and the quarries of a porcelain factory all contain more Jewish mass graves. And then there are the bodies of those executed not by the German machinery of extermination, in a systematic fashion and at specially chosen locations, but instead murdered "spontaneously" by private individuals—"mostly by local polizeien in a state of inebriation," in the language of an official Soviet report.¹² These victims' bodies have no graves at all: in contravention of German directives and to the consternation of the local sanitation department, they were left to rot next to their homes in "unregistered" sites all over town. In this way, the novel's gruesome topography divides the dead in the most literal sense, with each type of burial site marking a different fate, a different death, and a different tragedy.

It is the last category of victim that Gorenstein restores to memory and mourns in *Redemption*. At the heart of the novel are two excruciating scenes of disinterment of August's loved ones. Gorenstein is unsparing in making the reader witness the uncovering of the brutalized and defiled bodies and hear the ghastly account of their last minutes delivered by the eternally drunken janitor Frania. Dumped in the sewage-soaked soil and daily desecrated, August's family, like other such "spontaneously" murdered Jews, are in the category of their own. As the Soviet narrative minimized the extent of the collaboration, Jewish victims of local populations remained virtually erased not only from the official history but, to a large extent, even from the alternative efforts at literary remembrance that *Redemption* joins. Unlike the victims of mass executions, August's family has no plaque commemorating, however imperfectly and evasively, their lives and their tragedies. Their names, one

9. Fridrikh Gorenshtein, *Iskuplenie in Izbrannoe v trekh tomakh* (Moscow 1992), 2:164.

10. *Ibid.*, 2:252.

11. *Ibid.*, 2:165.

12. *Ibid.*, 2:177.

character remarks, are not even registered in the feldgendarmerie's otherwise meticulous records. It is the mission of the novel to restore these victims to memory.

August is consumed with fantasies of revenge. But his rage is impossible to mistake for or sublimate into a Soviet response. It is intensely personal: he dreams of tearing up Shuma's flesh and sinews and of killing his children. August deliberately depoliticizes Shuma's horrendous murder. Unlike those lying at the quarries, who "were killed by fascism and totalitarianism," his loved ones "were killed by a neighbor with a rock . . . Fascism," he says, echoing the official idiom, "is a temporary stage of imperialism, but neighbors are eternal, as are rocks."¹³ In so drawing a distinction between different types of Jewish suffering, August is not seeking to create a hierarchy of pain. A philosophy student in his pre-war life, he rather seeks to differentiate between the types of evil. Shuma's murder of his family, unspeakable as it is, still belongs to the realm of the old, familiar evil: "an old sin, in the face of which humanity has learnt to perpetuate its kind."¹⁴ But "an inexorable, planned murder—this is a new quality. . ."¹⁵ Paradoxically, in its perfect form, this new type of evil would be free of violence. "In the ideal case," August says, claiming to refer to a mimeograph-printed work, "the Jewish people should have died quietly and painlessly in locations strictly designated for this purpose, thereby fulfilling its international duty before humanity in the name of universal happiness."¹⁶

Gorenshtein and Western Post-Holocaust Thought

August's reference to an illegally circulating work signals the novel's involvement with ideas far outside the boundaries of the permissible—equally unthinkable both within the Soviet literary mainstream and in alternative narratives of commemoration smuggled into the official space. Although in accordance with the novel's chronology, the work referenced by August presumably predates the end of the war, its ideas resonate with the debates on the Holocaust unfolding in the west in the 1960s, when Gorenshtein was working on *Redemption*. One such debate centered on the historical uniqueness of the Holocaust, a debate where August appears to come out on the side of those who saw it as a new, radical kind of evil, fundamentally different from prior catastrophes. As for some of these western writers, for August, "the new quality" appears to lie in the combination of absolute goals and modern technology and forms of political organization that powered them. August's reflection on the Jewish people's "international duty" to cease its existence in order to pave the way for the humanity's radiant future braids together an especially macabre recasting of the figure of the Jewish people as the Suffering Servant, much debated in western post-Holocaust theology, and the rhetoric of the Enlightenment and modernity as key sources of the Holocaust.

13. *Ibid.*, 2:236.

14. *Ibid.*, 2:254.

15. *Ibid.*, 2:256.

16. *Ibid.*, 2:253–54.

But it is in Gorenshtein's approach to the problem of redemption that the novel reveals the full extent of its investment in conceptual and ethical issues similar to those animating Jewish post-Holocaust thought in the west. At stake for Gorenshtein is not only and not even primarily personal redemption. The question he asks is about the possibility of attributing any positive value or meaning to catastrophic suffering, which he poses in largely theodic terms: can the traditional notion of the omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent God as an active creator of history and of history as the book where one reads the imprint of divine will endure in the face of the Holocaust? Such posing of the question, as well as the terms in which Gorenshtein tries out some possible answers, aligns him less with the Soviet corpus, especially in Russian, than with Jewish theological discourse taking shape in the 1960s–70s in the west.

The question of how much of that literature might have been available to Gorenshtein during those years falls beyond the scope of this article. But even if Gorenshtein was not deliberately engaging with writers like Richard Rubenstein, Emil Fackenheim, Eliezer Berkovits, and others writing contemporaneously in the west, he was responding to a similar constellation of issues that troubled them. Can one justify God and providence, as well as preserve the covenantal claim of meaning in history, in the face of Holocaust destruction? Can the suffering be made sense of? Can belief, or at least its possibility, be preserved? Can it offer a cure to historical nihilism? Can God himself be absolved, redeemed, and reclaimed for post-Holocaust faith? No less important than these questions is the key in which the novel carries out its search for answers. From its Biblical intertext to reflections on Baruch Spinoza and other Jewish thinkers, *Redemption* is involved in the Jewish intellectual and religious tradition more deeply and directly than other works of Soviet Holocaust literature in Russian.¹⁷

In Search of a Theodicy

As in Fedor Dostoevskii, one of Gorenshtein's most common interlocutors, philosophical reflections on the "accursed questions" of his own time are delivered in *Redemption* primarily through a series of conversations. All involve a repressed university professor, Pavel Danilovich. Arrested on trumped-up political charges, now awaiting prisoner transport, Pavel Danilovich meets August when he is sent by local authorities to assist at the exhumation. As a counter to August's anguished protest and incomprehension, Pavel Danilovich attempts to formulate a type of theodicy, seeking for a way if not to justify, then at least to explain the magnitude of the suffering and to reconcile it with the notions of God and providence. Like traditional theodicians, Pavel Danilovich relies on the idea of a delayed retribution for evil (and equally delayed reward for good), deferred to a messianic future, but with a significant update. According to him, the indefinitely postponed, otherworldly future of traditional theodicies will soon become a historical present. The end of time will be ushered in by what Pavel Danilovich calls "the biblical number": "a predetermined limit, after which all sacrifices and sufferings will be avenged"

17. On the term Soviet Holocaust literature, see Murav, *Music from a Speeding Train*, 152.

as God will exhaust his tolerance for the executioners.¹⁸ Pavel Danilovich's explanation of the nearness of history's end partakes of the anti-modernity strand of the broader western post-Holocaust discourse: "The more emancipated man becomes, the more science develops, the greater number of people begin to respect themselves, their personality, their dignity, the greater the number of their victims grows."¹⁹ Thus, it is secular humanism and the rational telos of the Enlightenment that amplify humanity's barbarism and accelerate the approach of "the sacred limit."²⁰ Pavel Danilovich even claims to have calculated the date of the final messianic redress: 1979.²¹

To August, this attempt at a theodicy is nothing more than the "vile, snakelike wisdom" that surreptitiously enters and corrupts one's thoughts. He thinks Pavel Danilovich deserves a good beating. August is repulsed by the implication of inevitability, even necessity, of innocent suffering in the professor's "two-bit" philosophizing.²² And he rejects the delay of retribution, even if the end of time is close at hand. Like Ivan Karamazov, Gorenshtein's go-to anti-theodicist, August fantasizes about crushing the executioners' spines in the here and now: "Your biblical number will begin growing tremendously and approach the sacred limit."²³

The contest between the two positions is not definitively resolved. The figure of Job, the archetypal, if not unambiguous, symbol of revolt, is never far from the narrator's thoughts. And yet, the novel's willingness to entertain a whole range of theodicy projects indicates where *Redemption* leans. Besides Pavel Danilovich's "biblical number," there is also his effort, forced as it may appear, of fitting into a theodic logic the thought of the seventeenth-century Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza. That Spinoza's God is hardly a good fit for a typical theodicy only highlights Pavel Danilovich's sense of urgency.²⁴ To judge from the long comment on the margins of his tattered volume of what we assume must be Spinoza's *Ethics*, what seems to appeal to Pavel Danilovich the most is Spinoza's notion of inviolable determinism. Pavel Danilovich takes comfort in the idea that nothing could have been anything other than what it was both because it grounds God's perfection and because it restores the notion of the overarching universal order. Pavel Danilovich stops short of elaborating on the promise the existence of a larger, if unfathomable, pattern has for seemingly meaningless suffering, but the theodic thrust of his reflections is evident.

It is through the narrator, however, not through Pavel Danilovich, that Gorenshtein brings home how the broadening of the time frame may help to reinterpret innocent suffering. In his own bid at an explanation, the narrator

18. Gorenshtein, *Iskuplenie*, 2:255–57.

19. *Ibid.*, 2:257.

20. *Ibid.*, 2:257.

21. *Ibid.*, 2:270.

22. *Ibid.*, 2:255.

23. *Ibid.*, 2:258.

24. On the unsuitability of Spinoza's god for a traditional type of theodicy, see Steven Nadler, "Spinoza in the Garden of Good and Evil," in Elmar J. Kremer and Michael J. Latzer, eds., *The Problem of Evil in Early Modern Philosophy* (Toronto, 2001), 66–80. Nadler ends up mobilizing Spinoza for theodicy but on different terms.

ponders the ideas of an unnamed Jewish convert and “failed writer” who drew a link between the “ridiculously absurd and bloody history of humanity” and geotectonic processes as they were theorized by the German geologist Hans Stille. “The blood of the innocent and the groans of the weak,” along with “the executioner’s salacious laughter,” figure here as a reflection of Earth’s planetary evolution.²⁵ Although God is no longer part of the picture, the drive to account for suffering and evil remains. However fanciful, eclectic, and far-flung from more conventional theodicies, these reflections reveal the novel’s concern with the problem of evil and suggest its openness to a theodic logic.

Psalm: Theodicy Found

Still, its search for a theodicy notwithstanding, *Redemption* keeps alive a strong possibility that its world is godless and despiritualized. Swept by cosmic winds and battered by the forces of nature, it is a world where even religious ecstasy is said to be caused by atmospheric phenomena adversely affecting blood circulation. With *Psalm* (1975), Gorenshtein’s next long novel, such dual reading would be all but impossible. As Natal’ia Ivanova rightly noted in her introduction to *Psalm*’s 2001 edition, Gorenshtein does not merely adopt the elements of biblical aesthetics, he “dares to compete with the book of books.”²⁶ Indeed, for all its fallenness and seeming forsakenness, the world of *Psalm* is pregnant with divine presence, and the hesitation of *Redemption* now gives way to a more confident and traditionalist affirmation of theodicy.

One of the two major novels of Gorenshtein’s Soviet period (the other one is *Place*), *Psalm* constitutes a radical experiment in the novel form. Its very way of transforming personal histories into larger patterns of symbolic meaning defies the familiar novelistic convention of furnishing abstract schemes with particulars, instead imbuing the narration, reduced to its very essentials, with the quality of an ancient parable. The novel’s austere aesthetics, what Yuri Veksler so aptly described as Gorenshtein’s “Biblical realism,” is in line with its austere ethics.²⁷ From his quarrel with secular humanism and its deification of the human being, which Gorenshtein saw as a basic ingredient of fascism, to his rejection of the Christian cult of suffering and forgiveness as an inadequate foundation of morality—several of Gorenshtein’s key preoccupations can be traced back to *Psalm* (and, in a more tentative form, to the 1966 novella “*The Steps*”). In *Psalm*, Gorensthtein insists on retribution for the wicked, even as he concedes that life is rife with injustice. In *Psalm*, he unapologetically asserts the Old Testament’s enduring primacy over the New, the deep continuity of traditions deliberately suppressed from the outset by the ideologues of the new faith. In *Psalm*, he suggests that Christian

25. Gorenshtein, *Iskuplenie*, 2:279; see also the tribute to Gorenshtein, cited in n3 above, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNxwDk2jOJc>.

26. Natal’ia Ivanova, “Skvoz’ nenavist’—k liubvi, skvoz’ liubov’—k ponimaniuu. Predislovie k romanu F. Gorenshteina *Psalom*” (2001), at www.belousenko.com/books/Gorenstein/gorenstein_psalom_ivanova.htm (accessed October 25, 2023).

27. Yuri Veksler, “Molilis’ i chertu tozhe. O bibleiskom realizme i teatral’nykh mirakh pisatel’ia Fridrikha Gorenshteina.” *Ex libris*, March 22, 2012, 4, at https://imwerden.de/pdf/veksler_gorenstein_exlibris_2012_22_03.pdf (accessed October 25, 2023).

love for humanity is merely a lesser variant of Judaism's love for God, offered as an easier substitute to the weak and sinful humanity unable to love God by following his commands. As one commentator noted, Gorenshtein's moral vision resembles that of the ancient prophet—the world as seen through “the harsh and tragic” prism of the Old Testament, “without the advantage of having one's sins redeemed beforehand by the Savior.”²⁸ The parables of *Psalm* breathe the air of the Biblical past.

The material of these parables, however, is supplied by recent times. *Psalm* (the full title is *Psalm, A Novel-Reflection on God's Four Curses*) depicts a span of Soviet history from the years of Holodomor, through the war, to post-war decades, with each period roughly corresponding to the fulfillment of one of the four punishments prophesied by Ezekiel: famine, war, wild beasts (standing for lust) and disease (standing for spiritual disease), visited on the Soviet population, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. The novel further suggests that a fifth punishment—thirst and hunger after God's word—may be imminent. *Psalm*, thus, stages the realization of biblical prophecies, upholding the view of the Bible as the key to history's meaning and pattern, and of itself as something akin to its supplement. “Time,” the narrator says, “is the language spoken by God to man.”²⁹ In *Psalm*, God speaks the language of wrath and rebuke.

Nor is there any doubt as to God's involvement and presence. As already noted, the novel's main protagonist is the Antichrist, sent by God to live among Soviet citizens. Named Dan, Gorenshtein's Antichrist is not the enemy of Christ, but his brother and God's emissary, equally involved, in a Goethean fashion, in the realization of God's plan. Unlike Christ, who in Gorenshtein's scheme acts as the intercessor for evildoers, Dan acts as their judge, one bestowed with the power of damnation, even if this power does not translate into any immediate action, with a few notable exceptions I discuss in the next section.³⁰

As in *Redemption*, much of the philosophical discussion in *Psalm* revolves around the problem of evil. But Gorenshtein's approach to it is now different. Theodicy is no longer open to debate, let alone to rejection or disagreement. Nor does it call for ingenious interpretations or require multiple attempts. It is asserted unambiguously and authoritatively not by any of the characters but by the narrator who channels the voices of the prophets and even of God himself. The questions tormenting the characters of *Redemption* are now settled definitively and for good. Can God be responsible for all the suffering and evil? He cannot, as the immediate responsibility for evil defacing human lives lies with humanity. Can evil be the product of God's will? No, it cannot, as only good can be connected to the godhead. Where does evil originate? Its sources lie in the fallen condition of humanity, flowing inevitably from the postlapsarian curse of “labor and history.”³¹ Why do the wicked prosper?

28. Grigorii Nikiforovich, *Otkrytie Gorenshteina* (Moscow, 2013), 103.

29. Fridrich Gorenshtein, *Psalom: Roman-razmyshlenie o chtetyrekh kazniakh Gospodnikh in Izbrannoe v trekh tomakh* (Moscow, 1993), 3:278.

30. *Ibid.*, 3:14, 3:26, 3:302.

31. *Ibid.*, 3:200.

Because their retribution is deferred. Can suffering be visited on humanity as God's punishment for sin? Yes, it can but with the final goal of cleansing and salvation. As if to drive the novel's unequivocally theodic message, Gorenshstein concludes it with a clarification of its title. All life, no matter how terrible, bitter, and filled with misery, he writes at the end of *Psalm*, is a privilege and a blessing. It is an occasion for a psalm of praise to God.³²

The theodic logic of *Psalm* thus follows the canonical response: a simultaneous insistence on God's perfection and humanity's fallenness laid out already in Deuteronomy. Even in depicting the Holocaust, Gorenshstein keeps to this view, holding Jews partially responsible for their own catastrophe. Two modifications, however, need to be briefly noted. One is that the postponed retribution for evildoers does not appear to be deferred into the eschatological future to be carried out by God himself. The tormentors, butchers, and executioners will meet their reckoning on this side of the eschaton at the hands of evildoers still more terrible than they.³³ The other involves a redefinition of the main Jewish sin. It is not the traditional sins of the Bible, nor the modern sins of assimilation or Zionism that Gorenshstein imputes to Jews. Although he retains the idea of Jewish election as a matter historical record—"as a historical formation and a biblical phenomenon this people is close to God"—Jews for Gorenshstein are no more or less corrupt than any other people.³⁴ The only "genuine" sin that sets Jews apart and for which they endure the punishment of the Holocaust is their Defenselessness, the word Gorenshstein capitalizes, perhaps to imply more than its political dimension.³⁵ "In this only you are guilty before other peoples, and of this only your sin before Me consists," God says to uncomprehending Dan witnessing Jewish destruction.³⁶ Invoking the idea of the surviving remnant, the God of *Psalm* promises only punishment, not extinction.

Psalm thus belongs among modern interpretations of the tradition in the vein of Martin Buber, Joseph Soloveitchik, and other modern Jewish thinkers committed to prioritizing a "theodic center" over "antitheodic margins" of classical Jewish texts (a posture that was reversed by the next generation of Jewish theologians scandalized by their predecessors' efforts to cling to traditional solutions to the problem of evil in the wake of the Holocaust).³⁷ In fact, in the explicitness and frankness of its project, *Psalm* goes beyond these modern theodicies. While their efforts at resituating evil and suffering in a redemptive framework are often tempered and qualified—sometimes even to the point of ostensibly rejecting theodicy altogether—*Psalm* is unapologetically and frankly committed to theodic thinking. But if *Psalm* takes such a decisive step in affirming the theodic tradition, why is it that Gorenshstein's

32. *Ibid.*, 3:312.

33. *Ibid.*, 3:124, 2:135.

34. *Ibid.*, 3:136.

35. *Ibid.*, 3:124, 3:273.

36. *Ibid.*, 3:124.

37. On the relationship between a "theodic center" and "antitheodic margins" in classical Jewish texts and on their reconfigurations in post-Holocaust Jewish thought, see Zackary Braiterman, *(God) After Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Princeton, 1999).

response to the novel's critics reverberates, as I show in the last section, with echoes of antitheodic protest in the mold of Ivan Karamazov? To answer this question, we need to consider the terms in which the critique of the novel was advanced.

"To Comrade Matsa": Gorenshtein's "Rebellion"

Grigory Pomerants's 1992 review of *Psalm* lays bare what is at stake. Pomerants was not the only critic who felt less than enthusiastic about Gorenshtein's works when they finally began appearing in Russia in the early 1990s. But his 1992 review of *Psalm*, which followed the novel's serialization in *October*, and Gorenshtein's subsequent reply, help us see how Gorenshtein's understanding of evil and of the proper response to it constitutes a revolt against the accepted parameters of Jewish participation in the Russian literary tradition.

Pomerants began the review by establishing his Jewishness only to distance himself from the Jewishness of Gorenshtein.³⁸ To him, a Jew "but not from the tribe of Dan," Gorenshtein's point of view is nothing short of "sacrilegious." Gorenshtein's blasphemy appears to lie squarely in the novel's departure from Christian ethics. To Gorensthein, Pomerants writes, Christ is "a space alien" and the idea of blessing those who curse you is inconceivable. Gorenshtein's is a God of wrath and retribution, even as his own ire remains pitifully impotent, artistically and ethically. "How helpless," Pomerants notes, "are Gorenshtein's own curses! He killed one alcoholic, another got paralyzed" and some German soldiers "dropped dead from stomach colics." Pomerants refers to the several episodes where Dan, in the moments of weakness and in defiance of God's plan, uses his power to bring retribution down on the wicked instead of deferring the final reckoning until the appointed hour. "How negligible this is compared to the scope of evil," Pomerants observes with respect to the German soldiers. "And how powerful is another rejoinder, of a nameless Jew, suffocated and burnt in Dachau." The prayer of the unnamed Dachau Jew, which Pomerants offered as a model response to the Holocaust, deserves to be quoted in full:

Let all vengeance cease, all calls to punishment and retribution. Crimes have overfilled the cup; human reason is no longer capable of grasping it. Infinite are the multitudes of martyrs. So don't put their suffering on the scale of your justice, oh Lord. Don't turn them into a terrible indictment of the tormentors in order to exact a frightful penance. Repay them in another way. Take into consideration the good, not the evil. And let's remain in the memory of our enemies not as victims, not as a horrible nightmare, not as ghosts relentlessly haunting them but as aids in their struggle to eradicate the spree of their criminal passions. We don't want anything else from them.³⁹

After several years of delay, Gorenshtein responded to his critics in "To Comrade Matsa, Critic and Man, as Well as to His Heirs," a generically

38. On Pomerants's and other Jewish critics' efforts to distance themselves from Gorenshtein, see Harriet Murav, "A Curse upon Russia: Gorenshtein's Anti-Psalom and the Critics," *The Russian Review* 52, no. 2 (April 1993): 213–27.

39. Pomerants, "Psalm Antikhrista."

remarkable fusion of autobiography, literary polemic, and artistic manifesto, where he articulated, in the tones of deliberate hyperbolic overkill, some of his long-standing views.⁴⁰ A section of the essay dedicated to Pomerants takes special care to address the prayer of the Dachau Jew.

To Gorenshtein, the prayer is not “powerful” but “sacrilegious,” the same word Pomerants used about Gorenshtein’s point of view in *Psalm*.⁴¹ For one thing, Pomerants’s Jew could not have been nameless, given the meticulous record keeping in the Nazi camps. In fact, he is not a historically real person: he and his prayer, Gorenshtein notes, are invented by Pomerants himself and quoted from his own book of essays. Pomerants’s Jew is an invention designed for literary evenings with champagne and blintzes or for the theatrical *literaturshchina* in *Sovremennik* or *Lenkom*. Gorenshtein does not believe in such a Jew, as no Jew in Dachau would feel or speak this way.

For Gorenshtein, the incongruous prayer of the fictional Dachau Jew stems from Pomerants’s “ambo Christianity,” his magnanimous forbearance serving as an anesthetic plastered over unhealed wounds.⁴² It strikes Gorenshtein as a bit of pietism that derives from “Russian Orthodox agitprop” and the legacy of Alexander Men’, a Christian Orthodox priest of Jewish origin who proselytized among the Jewish intelligentsia until he was brutally murdered with an axe in 1990.⁴³ Gorenshtein does not claim to know if Pomerants was one of Men’s flock but he identifies him with Men’s Jewish converts: a crowd of lachrymose and grateful Aleksandr Ivanychs and Mar’ Ivanovny who bought into Men’s liberal Orthodox missionarism, which Gorenshtein’s sees as a form of political propaganda aimed at erasing whatever traces of Jewish culture are still left. The name Aleksandr Ivanovich, used by Gorenshtein in the ironical plural, derives from Anton Chekhov’s “Perekati pole,” a short story about an encounter with a converted Jew so named.

More importantly, Gorenshtein questions Pomerants’s very standing to forgive. It is in this thread of his reflections that Gorenshtein most audibly echoes the antitheodic thinking of Ivan Karamazov. In Dostoevskii’s novel, Ivan recites a catalogue of brutal violence against children as a foundation for his rejection of God’s creation. Several of Ivan’s examples involve violence against children witnessed by their mothers, including examples of Slavic babies thrown up in the air and caught on Turkish bayonets, a brutal image resonating with Gorenshtein’s smashed Jewish babies, as we will see. This catalogue of atrocities grounds Ivan’s “rebellion” against God’s world that is

40. For a recent insightful discussion of this essay, see Marat Grinberg, *The Soviet Jewish Bookshelf: Jewish Culture and Identity Between the Lines* (Brandeis UP, 2023), 194–95.

41. Fridrikh Gorenshtein, “Tovarishchu Matsa, literaturovedui cheloveku, a takzhe ego potomkam. Pamflet-dissertatsiia s memuarnymi etiudami i lichnymi razmyshleniiami,” *Zerkalo zagadok. Literaturnoe prilozhenie* (Berlin, 1997), 48.

42. Gorenshtein, “Tovarishchu Matsa,” 46. That these wounds are festering is evident to Gorenshtein as much from the remarkable vividness as from the feigned lightheartedness with which Pomerants recalls an encounter with an antisemitic drunk thirty years after the fact.

43. For an illuminating discussion of Soviet Jewish converts into Orthodox Christianity, see Judith Deutsch Kornblatt, *Doubly Chosen: Jewish Identity, the Soviet Intelligentsia, and the Russian Orthodox Church* (Madison, 2004).

permeated with innocent and unavenged suffering. He rejects the narrative of redemption of all sin and the promise of universal reconciliation at the end of time where the mother embraces the perpetrator. To Ivan, the idea of the mother forgiving her son's sadistic killer, necessary for the universal reconciliation, is unacceptable. The promise of universal harmony figures in his thinking as both an impossible and impermissibly costly ideal.

Like Ivan, who denies the mother's standing to forgive on behalf of her murdered son, Gorenshstein denies Pomerants's standing to forgive on behalf of the real—rather than imagined—Dachau victims. Such forgiveness, Gorenshstein writes, resembles “turning another's cheek.”⁴⁴ Also like Ivan, Gorenshstein questions the very appropriateness of forgiveness as a response to true evil. Ivan thirsts for retribution “and not somewhere and sometime in eternity, but here on earth, so that I can see it.” He ends up “returning his ticket” to future harmony and commits to remaining “with unavenged suffering and unsatisfied indignation, *even if [he is] wrong*.”⁴⁵ We know that Ivan's ticket is on Gorenshstein's mind when he responds to Pomerants's rebuke for taking too close a look at the “realm of life” at which Pomerants himself looks “from a bird's eye view.” “One can, of course, look at suffering ‘from a bird's eye view,’” Gorenshstein writes, “one can console oneself—but not the victims—that one day the happy future will arrive, where there will be no hatred, no murder, no lust or shame—the kingdom of new Adam . . .” But he, Gorenshstein, does not believe in the “gospel of the last Adam's arrival,” as the whole history of the twentieth century makes it defunct.⁴⁶

The echoes of Ivan's antitheodic revolt in Gorenshstein's defense of *Psalm* do not subvert the novel's theodic commitment. But they cast into sharper relief Gorenshstein's own “rebellion” as laid bare by Grinberg: his refusal to embrace Christian tenets as a price of participation in the Russian literary tradition. Arkady Moshchinsky, who holds a similar understanding of Gorenshstein's religious vision, elaborates. For Gorenshstein, Moshchinsky writes, Christianity is not the repository of Truth.⁴⁷ He rejects the notion that with the arrival of the New Testament the Old one became defunct. Only when read through the “blindness” of tradition and ideology, which from the outset needed the Judaic enemy to justify its own existence as a new faith, can the New Testament be seen as negating or superseding the old Jewish law.⁴⁸ From Gorenshstein's perspective, an intellectually honest reading, unencumbered by centuries of distortions and obfuscations, reveals that the New Testament

44. Gorenshstein, “Tovarishchu Matsa,” 52.

45. Fedor M. Dostoevskii, *Brat'ia Karamazovy. Roman v chetyrekh chastiakh s epilogom*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, eds. V.G. Bazanov, V.V. Vinogradov, G.M. Fridlender (Leningrad, 1972–90) 14:222, 223. Italics in the original.

46. Gorenshstein, “Tovarishchu Matsa,” 43–44.

47. Arkadii Moshchinskii, “O knige Miny Polianskoi ‘Ia pisatel' nezakonnyi . . .’,” *SlovoWord* 45, (2005), <https://magazines.gorky.media/slovo/2005/45/o-knige-miny-polyanskoy-ya-pisatel-nezakonnij.html>; Grinberg, “Esse Gorenshsteina: V poiskakh prichiny,” *Lekhaim*, at <https://lekhaim.ru/events/esse-gorenshsteina-v-poiskah-prichiny/> (accessed October 26, 2023).

48. Gorenshstein, “Tovarishchu Matsa”; Gorenshstein, “Pritcha o bogatom iunoshe,” 577, at www.gorenstein.imwerden.de/gorenshstein_pritcha_o_bogatom_junoshe.pdf (accessed 10/25/2023).

complements, not negates, the Old, embracing and continuing its theological, philosophical, and ethical precepts.

In particular, Gorenshstein is troubled by the redeeming power that Christian dogma attributes to repentance. In another curious adaptation of Dostoevskii, Gorenshstein draws a distinction between the believing but transgressing Jew and the believing but transgressing Christian.⁴⁹ In the “Parable of the Rich Youth,” a fictional meditation on the corresponding New Testament episode, Gorenshstein writes: “The believing Jew, when doing evil, knows that he goes against God. The believing Christian, while doing evil, retains the harmony of the soul, retains, through church penance, his relationship with God, because non-resistance to evil has long been replaced with repentance for the evil done.”⁵⁰ In Gorenshstein’s retributivist ethics, severe crimes must be met with severe punishments—not for reasons of prevention but because justice demands it, especially when the crime is “committed in a state of inebriation,” by which he means that it is fueled by an ideology.⁵¹ Nor does Gorenshstein believe in the repentance of the perpetrators. No Blobel, the organizer of the Babi Yar massacre, or Macici, the henchman of Odessa, or a nameless military policeman who smashed Jewish babies against the wall in front of their mothers (an echo of Ivan’s atrocities), feel any remorse. They merely did what they perceived to be their duty. Their conscience is undisturbed, and they continue to see their “pink dreams: women’s thighs and schweinebraten with beer.”⁵² Thinking along similar lines as Cynthia Ozick, who considers remorse of a Nazi SS soldier an aggravating factor, not a mitigating one, Gorenshstein believes that those capable of sincere repentance are incapable of the crime.⁵³

For all its austerity, even desolation, Gorenshstein’s world has a place for love and redemption. But Gorenshstein believes in the existence of evil impervious to the healing powers of forgiveness, the kind of evil that, as he explains in his “self-review” of *Redemption*, renders even “Christ’s all-forgiving love useless, like a living seed for a stone.”⁵⁴ The imperative of meeting such evil with an appropriate response is moral in nature; it is an obligation imposed by the demands of justice, independent of any other considerations. “Yes, punishing evil with evil does not prevent new evil,” Gorenshstein continues. “But is this the essence of the problem?” At stake is “not preventing new evil but justice in relation to the evil done. Only consistent justice in relation to already committed evil can oppose new evil.”⁵⁵

To Gorenshstein, the problem of the appropriate response to evil lies at the heart of his disagreements with Pomerants. But whatever importance this

49. Dostoevskii, *Brat'ia Karamazovy*, 14:60.

50. Gorenshstein, “Pritcha o bogatom iunoshe,” 577. This echoes elements of Ivan and Zosima’s discussion of the western and Russian criminal in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky, *PSS* 14:59–61.

51. Gorenshstein, “Tovarishchu Matsa,” 46. Also see Fridrikh Gorenshstein, “Prestuplenie i iskuplenie. Samoretsenziia” https://gorenstein.imwerden.de/prestuplenie_iskuplenie.pdf (accessed 10/25/2023).

52. Gorenshstein, “Tovarishchu Matsa,” 49.

53. Cynthia Ozick in Simon Wiesenthal, Harry J. Cargas, and Bonny V. Fetterman, eds., *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*, (New York, 1998), 213–19.

54. Gorenshstein, “Prestuplenie i iskuplenie”

55. *Ibid.*

problem may hold for each writer on its own terms, the dialogue between them also reveals it as a proxy for discussing the issue of Soviet Jewish identity. Pomerants's message of forgiveness seeks to render his Jewishness innocuous and inoffensive and to cordon it off from what he perceives as the offending Jewishness of Gorenshstein.⁵⁶ To Gorenshstein, in turn, Pomerants's condensation of Christian idiom presents as his figurative conversion, which he counters with an effort to rehabilitate the wisdom of Mosaic law. Nor is Pomerants's limitless beneficence a strictly private matter—a mere sublimation of his legitimate but forbidden anger in the vein of “intellectual-Christian Freudianism.”⁵⁷ Gorenshstein hints at the suprapersonal consequences of “meeting earthly hatred with heavenly love,” which to him resembles “paying with a false coin.” “Of course, the heavens in themselves are majestic, but heavenly and earthly must be kept separate. . . . Earthly must be opposed with earthly. And if such opposition does not guarantee earthly love, at least it guarantees earthly survival.”⁵⁸ The reference to survival casts Pomerants's quietism as a version of that special Jewish sin of “Defenselessness” that Gorenshstein decried in *Psalm* and elsewhere.

Gorenshstein's refusal to meet earthly hatred with heavenly love, so reminiscent of Ivan's rebellion, constitutes a rebellion of his own. As Pomerants's reaction shows, its emphasis on justice over grace and forgiveness departs from the protocols of engagement observed by many Jewish writers seeking to participate in the Russian literary process. But even some of Gorenshstein's friendlier readers seem unsettled by his brand of austerity if one were to judge by their efforts to fit him into the standard Christian mold. Alexander Proshkin's 2012 film adaptation of *Redemption* provides an example. Proshkin ends the film with a scene we will not find in Gorenshstein's novel: the surviving characters gather around the dinner table when someone remembers that today is Forgiveness Sunday, the last day before the Lent, when Orthodox believers forgive each other. The characters, including Sashen'ka, ask each other and receive forgiveness, perceptibly changing the complexion of the closing scene. For the film critic Elena Stishova, who also finds *Redemption* to be suffused with “the idea of evangelical all-forgiving love as the soul's salvation,” Proshkin's ending represents a “happy conjecture” of Gorenshstein's ideal reader. And she finds support for Proshkin's (and her own) reading in the already mentioned Gorenshstein's “self-review” of *Redemption*. “Evil external to us is overcome only through law, but evil within us is healed with love,” she quotes from Gorenshstein.⁵⁹

As we have seen above, however, the “self-review,” which begins by announcing that the problem of redemption is “first of all, the problem of punishment,” never suggests that love alone is capable of overcoming evil.

56. Harriet Murav discusses Jewish critics' strategies of distancing their Jewishness from Gorenshstein's in “A Curse on Russia: Gorenshstein's Anti-Psalom and the Critics,” *Russian Review* 52, no. 2 (April 1993): 223–24.

57. Gorenshstein, “Tovarishchu Matsa,” 46.

58. *Ibid.*, 52.

59. Elena Stishova, “Proshchenoe voskresenie. ‘Iskuplenie’ rezhisser Aleksandr Proshkin” at <https://old.kinoart.ru/archive/2012/08/proshchenoe-voskresene-iskuplenie-rezhisser-aleksandr-proshkin> (accessed November 13, 2023).

According to Gorenshtein, law is just as vital as love, an idea reprised in the very quotation whose first part Stishova chooses to ignore. For Gorenshtein, we remember, the old Jewish law endures in the New Testament, and the mere image of Christ offered as an example to follow is insufficient in restraining the evil inherent in human nature. In the “The Parable about the Rich Youth,” Gorenshtein suggests in the spirit of Dostoevskii’s Grand Inquisitor that Christianity demands too much of the weak and flawed humanity and thereby fails to offer sensible guidance for everyday living. Those “who cannot be saintly but want to be honest” need laws, not sermons, as better aides in reaching this more modest, but also more plausible, goal.⁶⁰

Commenting on the silence with which Russian critics received “The Parable,” Gorenshtein took it as a confirmation of his “foreignness to what is called ‘our writers and our literature.’”⁶¹ As he suggests in “Comrade Matsa,” one reason for this lay in his prioritizing of earthly justice over heavenly love and in the view of Christ’s message as fully compatible with the retributive ideal. Whatever other reasons one might cite for the lack of critical excitement about the novella, Gorenshtein was not wrong to see his views on evil, law, and retribution both as an obstacle to his admission into the ranks of Russian literature and as a source of discomfort for large swaths of readers, as Proshkin’s and Pomerants’s reactions, different as they are, demonstrate. While for Proshkin, Gorenshtein’s acceptance into the pantheon of Russian culture depends on revising his idiosyncratic and highly ambivalent take on Christianity into a familiar and traditional one, and for Pomerants, his own place in this pantheon depends on projecting a Christian persona to distance himself from what he saw as Gorenshtein’s menacing Jewishness, both reacted to Gorenshtein’s double provocation: as a writer daring to upend the theology of grace so vital to the Russian literary tradition and as a Jew daring to insist on his right to indignation in the face of evil.

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60. Gorenshtein, “Pritcha o bogatom iunoshe,” 576.

61. Gorenshtein, “Tovarishchu Matsa,” 44.