Dark Images of Dissidence: Modernism and Andrei Amalrik's Nose! Nose? No-se!

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Nancy Kindelan

I

Critics describe the dissident drama of Andrei Amalrik (1938-1980), especially *Nose! Nose? No-se!* (1968), as following the Russian tradition of the absurd, grotesque, and satire. Amalrik's adaptation of Gogol's short story, "The Nose" (1936), and his reading of Ionesco, Beckett, and the futuristic plays of Khlebnikov, link Amalrik to prior and modern perceptions of absurdist literary and dramatic techniques. In the absurdist world, reality is depicted as disjointed and disoriented, complete with characters who cannot communicate, fear authority and define life in isolation. Although it appears that Amalrik's play and the absurdist's world are similar, there is evidence that this play's intricate form allows for multiple interpretations. In *Twentieth-Century Drama*, Harold Segel notes that while there is a connection between Amalrik's plays and the absurdist and grotesque drama, "the complexity of his plays sets him apart." Particularly, he states that the "strange configurations of character and incident often make interpretation a matter of intuition or impression" (396). *Nose! Nose? No-se!* has received some literary and dramatic attention; however, little consideration has been afforded to how this play's "complexity," and the "strange configurations of character and incident" have combined to shape Amalrik's dramatic form. Russian dramatic criticism specifies that German expressionism played a minor role in the development of their drama; however, while there are no significant Russian expressionistic playwrights, Amalrik's play contains significant components of this form. More

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significantly, perhaps, an expressionistic interpretation provides a provocative insight into Amalrik's critical view of a society that has lost its individuality and sense of self.

Amalrik's life and work centered on a personal integrity which challenged the totalitarian state through continuing the literature of socialist-realism and by re-affirming the anti-utopian plays of Mayakovsky, such as *The Bedbug* (1928) and *The Bathhouse* (1928). Amalrik, the dissident novelist, playwright, and historian is known in the West primarily for his three major works, *Involuntary Journey to Siberia* (1966), *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* (1969), and *Notes of a Revolutionary* (1980), and not necessarily for his plays or his scholarship in history. His writings overtly state his pessimistic attitude about the future of democratic movement, stressing "the need to preserve one's internal freedom regardless of outside pressures" (Jacoby, *New York Times* 13). Amalrik's philosophy allowed him to think and write about a society that frowns on the individual's moral values. Thus when his diploma dissertation countered the official Soviet line, Amalrik's Moscow University degree was denied. Now deprived of any occupation that would allow him to use his intellect, and in an attempt to take care of his ailing father, Amalrik worked at part-time jobs and devoted his time to writing and collecting unofficial abstract art.[1] His first arrest as a "parasite" in 1965 was due to unorthodox behavior. *Involuntary Journey to Siberia* was written after his first incarceration; it has been cited for its meticulous descriptions and objective responses. During his first three-year exile, Amalrik's father died, and he married the artist, Gyussel Makudinova. Even though his exile was suspended after serving eighteen months, Amalrik found himself back in prison, in 1970, for another three-year sentence. This time the charges were more specific: completion of the two previously mentioned books (*Involuntary Journey to Siberia* and *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?*), two interviews with foreign correspondents, and an open letter to Kuznetsov[2] which emphasized Amalrik's cry for the individual's responsibility to self. This exile led him to a bout with meningitis; although he was gravely ill and almost died, his fight for freedom of expression was heard in America. Upon his imminent release, he was asked to lecture and conduct research at both Harvard and George Washington University. His release met with complications and subsequently aroused the concern and reaction of the Association of American Publishers. Eventually Andrei Amalrik was released; he emigrated with his wife in 1976. After spending some time in Europe and America studying and lecturing, he died a somewhat ironic death in November of 1980. On his way to a dissident gathering in Madrid to testify at a conference on examining compliance with the Helsinki Accords, a head-on collision caused a piece of metal to lodge in

Amalrik's throat. He was killed instantly.

Amalrik's *Nose! Nose? No-se!* depicts a totalitarian society that is disoriented, confused, inhuman, impotent, and corrupt. As in Gogol's satiric short story, "The Nose," it is the so-called major, Kovalev, who has lost his nose. The play's action is dependent upon a frustrating, anxiety-ridden search for that part of himself that allows him to exist as a complete human being. Amalrik's compressed dramatic format takes Kovalev across St. Petersburg; in a total of sixteen episodes, Amalrik satirizes bureaucracy, love, government, religion, and middle class morality. Amalrik's adept ability to manipulate the play's satiric edge produces a curiously complex ending. In the final moments, Kovalev finds his nose, and a jubilant dance follows. At this point, Gogol appears to take a bow; however, at second glance, it is revealed that it is not Gogol the author, but Gogol as portrayed by an actor. As the curtain falls, Amalrik's ambiguous ending continues to unfold; what first was thought to be Gogol, then perceived to be an actor playing the part of Gogol, is understood finally as the return of Kovalev's nose.

Much of Amalrik's play is as complex as the final moment of the play. What is clear, however, is Amalrik's statement about the lack of moral values in a society that has opted not for individual choice, but for a "class"morality and the idea that if orders and values are derived from authority then they are automatically good. Amalrik's position is specified in *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* Amalrik divides society into three groups: 1) an elite upper class bureaucracy, 2) an unsure and defeatist middle class concerned primarily with maintaining economic class status, and 3) the unskilled workers and peasants. Kovalev falls into the second category. His external appearance becomes the force that rules his identity to the point of absurdity. Like Amalrik's personal and constant rebellion, this play demonstrates "the need to preserve one's internal freedom regardless of outside pressures" (19). Kovalev, like so many of the Russian middle class, surrenders himself to a world that is corrupt and disoriented. But, perhaps, more devastating is the depiction of a world and morality that, despite Marxism, remains the same as in Gogol's day, therefore partially explaining Gogol's entrance in the complex ending of Amalrik's *Nose! Nose? No-se!*

A critical analysis of Amalrik's play demands that a comparison be made between the play and Gogol's short story. Many similarities occur between the two, although they tend to be more general than specific. Without a doubt, Amalrik follows the outline of "The Nose," and, in parts, the dialogue is from the short story. Also, Amalrik and Gogol seem to be in ideological and psychological agreement concerning Kovalev's plight. Both portray the so-called Major as the average man wanting, at all costs, to maintain his social

status. In both instances, government and civil service officials are corrupt, self-serving egotists who wallow in bureaucratic hierarchy. Psychological interpretations have suggested that the nose is a phallic symbol, thus concluding without a nose Kovalev has lost "his capacity for sexual activity" thereby becoming a "nonentity" (Setchkarev, *Gogol* 157). However, the risk of becoming a nonentity in the Soviet society of the early nineteenth century does not carry the same implication as it does in Soviet society of 1968. In retrospect, Gogol's warning is ominous, and it appears Amalrik is sensitive to his suggestions.

Both Gogol and Amalrik limit their action to one day; however, most writers depict that day as starting on March 25 and ending on April 7. Actually, it is the same day, depending upon which calendar one follows, Julian or Gregorian (Lindstrom, *Nikolay Gogol* 85). For Gogol time is not meant to be confusing but fantastic; for Amalrik, the ambivalence of two dates meaning the same day suggests time's illogical and disjointed whim, a common device of the theatre of the absurd.

The short story and play have been described as satires that use grotesque characters and plot as a technique to underline the fantastic situation (particularly in Gogol's case) and to accentuate the absurd qualities (specifically an Amalrik trait). The satire often allows the victim to be grotesque, in order to produce a combination of laughter and disgust, whereas the grotesque script will often make satirical points in order to elicit discomfort and aggression. The distinction between the two is important: the satire attempts to expose and rebuke society's existing morals; the grotesque neither attempts to expose and rebuke society's existing morals, nor attempts to analyze and instruct. On the contrary, the grotesque wishes to combine effectively, simultaneously, and equally laughter and anger. It might be thought, in particular, that the combination of satire and grotesque might lessen the satiric points. However, this combination is effective particularly in Amalrik's play, especially with his treatment of Kovalev. If grotesque can be defined as a form that employs exaggeration in all areas of the mise-en-scène, especially in speech and movement, and through magnification of some external characteristics conveys psychological association, then the Major's character in an effective combination of the comic and hideous which produces disharmony and abnormality. In this instance, the use of grotesque components breeds satiric effect.

In Gogol's "The Nose," the grotesque is used both to create Kovalev's situation (the abnormality of losing a nose and his inability to find it), as well as to underline the nature of character through exaggeration of some external feature (the nose) that best signifies the psychological quest (his sexual

identity). However, the intent and degree to which Gogol is interested in using grotesque characteristics seems to provide the essential difference between these writers.

Gogol's work is sometimes described as being a precursor of modern literary trends; in fact, "it is in the basic structure and pace of the story that the dream framework is most discernable" (Lindstrom, *Gogol* 85). However, close scrutiny of his work, and especially in comparison to Amalrik's play, indicates Gogol's form seems much more in line with realism, albeit fantastic and biting, than what is suggested by certain trends of modernism. His use of the grotesque to create the satire is significant, but it is not as powerful as Amalrik's choices. Perhaps the difference is within the authors' individual intents. Although Gogol's short story is definitely the source of Amalrik's play (especially the central character, plot, idea, and even some dialogue), Gogol's form, fantastic-realism (with a satiric edge), does not suffice in allowing Amalrik the dimension and focus his play demands, nor does it permit his statement the resonance or relevance which characterizes dissident drama.

Clearly, Amalrik's personal strife is reflected in his play, and his message is apparent; what remains less transparent, even enigmatic, is Amalrik's complex dramatic form. As previously stated, most critics place Amalrik's *Nose! Nose? No-se!* within the realm of the theatre of the absurd, and rightfully so, as his world is obviously "out of reason." Logical, cause-and-effect reality has been superseded by a treatment of character, idea, situation, and a diction (both linguistic and scenic) that is far from the empirical method. As a dramatic form, absurdism allows this play to connect to twentieth-century thought; as satire and grotesque it is clearly part of the Russian literary tradition. However, what makes this play provocative is the playwright's possible understanding of German expressionism as a means to underline the play's meaning and energize the satire. This understanding provides Amalrik with substance to reinforce his aggression, and a medium to communicate his dissatisfaction.

II

It would be a mistake to classify *Nose! Nose? No-se!* as an example of German expressionism; however, it would be an oversight to dismiss its many significant similarities. Although this form was never a predominant force in the Soviet Union, it is clear some interest in expressionism surfaced in the 1920s when the Germanic style was thought to be "fashionable."[3] Whereas these techniques were evident in dramatic production, Russian literary history produces no singular playwright that would be equivalent to Germany's Sorge,

Kaiser, or Hasenclever.

To complicate matters, the highly visible form, futurism, which enjoyed popularity in the Soviet Union, is similar to, and has been confused with, German expressionism. Both forms create dynamic personal experiences; therefore, they appear to be similar. This similarity is deceptive, for unlike the German expressionists who deplored materialism and industrialism, the futurists augmented their revolutionary spirit by adhering to the power behind the machine age: technology, speed, and energy.

Although Russian futurism (1908-1917) and Italian futurism (1909-1930) both attempted to find new literary forms that would liberate society, they were essentially different in nature. Because the Russian futurists concentrated on making their poetry accessible to everyone (Lindstrom, *A Concise History of Russian Literature* 47), they placed more emphasis on their cultural, sociological, and psychological connections than did their Italian counterparts.

Between 1912-1916, the Russian futurists sought a meta-logical language capable of universal communication. For example, some of these futurists borrowed words from all the languages of the Russian empire and rearranged, adapted, and experimented with all possible semantic and linguistic combinations. The result was a primitivistic absurdism that established their break with traditional literature.[4]

Whereas Russian futurism is word oriented, it is not dependent upon a logical arrangement of thoughts, instead it sought a "transmental language." For example, the appearance of Russian futurism with its strong visual statement, slanted capital letters, short groupings of words, upside down words, and different spaces between words, "highlighted the vast power of the word itself, freed it of conventional associations, examined it for all possible self-contained values in each letter, each sound, which carried its own relevance and meaning" (Lindstrom, *Russian History* 47). Perhaps due partly to the post-symbolic movement and to the romanticism which stimulated pre-revolutionary thought, Russian futurism is far more psychological than Italian futurism.

Emphasis on new forms and linguistic experiments supported a reality that was exaggerated and indifferent to the principle of verisimilitude. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Russian futurist, Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930), subscribed to a definition of art that refused to mimic nature, instead electing to distort nature by focusing on the individual's subconscious. Mayakovsky's interest in the potential of a solipsistic reality that could reach, awaken, and rebuild humanity is seen most specifically in his play, *Vladimir Mayakovsky, A Tragedy* (1913). It is believed that Nikolai Evreinov

(1879-1953) and his work in "monodrama" influenced Mayakovsky; in particular, the connection is seen in this form's reliance on uncovering unconscious thought and allowing its dynamism to manipulate the play's reality. Evreinov's theory on "monodrama," was published first in his "An Introduction to Monodrama" (1909). Evreinov advocated that "monodrama" was an artistic form that ". . . forces every one of the spectators to enter the situation of the acting character, to live his life, that is to say to feel as he does and through imagination to think as he does and as it were, above all to see and to hear the same things as the acting character" (N. Kul'bin, *Studiya Impressionistov* 53). In the sense that Mayakovsky's *Tragedy* focuses on the individual consciousness of one character and that character embodies the action, the connection between Mayakovsky and "monodrama" is evident. What is not clear is how Evreinov's theories both reflected expressionism and provided a possible entree into the complexities of Amalrik's dissident drama, *Nose! Nose? No-se!*

By extending a view of the world through the soul or internal consciousness of the protagonist, some Russian futurism is remarkably similar to all German expressionism thereby often causing some confusion between the two forms. Whereas, Evreinov labels his concept "monodrama," the German expressionists prefer "*Ich*-drama." Although there is a "tendency to confuse Expressionism with certain extreme currents of modern art such as Futurism" (Samuel & Thomas, *Expressionism* 10), such a connection is apparent only in artistic intent as the outgrowth of current aesthetic thought, and not necessarily in dramatic form. "Monodrama" is that one aspect of Russian futurism that best resembles German expressionism. For example, in some Russian futurists' and German expressionists' works, there is a reaction against a material world view by stressing visionary thought based on subjective experience. They do not reproduce a world, instead they create a reality that searches for answers that have eternal, not momentary significance. In order to detail the differences and similarities, and to uncover some of the complexities in Amalrik's play, it is necessary to view briefly the nature of German expressionism.

German expressionism (1907-1924) was stimulated by a crisis of the human consciousness. The development of a mechanized, technological society and the conditions that accompanied the imminent war, persuaded humankind that answers to life's questions were not found solely through science, but by uncovering and studying its subconscious and unconscious states. The disciples of German expressionism desired change: some wanted reform in society, and others were interested in the liberation of the soul.[5] Emphasis on the individual, as seen primarily in "*Ich*-dramas," is a technique that concurrently gives responsibility to the protagonist, and allows that individual to speak

collectively for humankind. By magnifying the protagonist's actions and thoughts, one's emancipated self-portrait is projected. For the German expressionists, this process promoted a clearer understanding of reality; therefore, by acknowledging their pain, confusion, and the impending doom of civilization, they had the foresight to rise up from the ruins. Through both recognition and understanding, they could assess the necessity of the individual's responsibility; by accepting the intermediary role, they had the power to face and, possibly defy the modern world's unjust, inhuman devastations.

By weaving a plot that is episodic and open (initiated by ideas not action), replete with tableaux or different stages; by projecting the central idea through the protagonist's eyes, and therefore affecting place and spectacle; as well as by creating the faceless, symbolic caricatures, German expressionism emerges as a dramatic form free from the constraints of romanticism, naturalism, and realism.

If it is accepted that German expressionism generally focuses on the internal reality of one character and allows that reality to affect plot, theme, diction, spectacle, and other characteristics, then its association to "monodrama" is obvious. Both German expressionism and "monodrama" rely on dramatic rhythm to convey the protagonist's subjectivity; the development of that rhythm is accomplished often through production technique, and it is likely to create the play's mood and atmosphere. Although Evreinov's "monodrama" has some dramatic components that parallel German expressionism, the major difference between the two forms lies within the protagonist's ability to perceive and evaluate one's course of events. For example, Evreinov's parody on psychophysiology, *The Theatre of the Soul* (1912), depicts the conflict that arises between the protagonist's rational and emotional selves. However, unlike the protagonist in German expressionism, who seems out-of-control, Evreinov's central character has the opportunity to reason and make personal choices.[6]

Although both German expressionism and Russian futurism use sensational colors and distorted shapes, these futurists were probably more influenced by the cubists' angles and colors, whereas these expressionists emphasized shadows and stark contrasts. Another notable difference is the German expressionists' use of diction to convey the anxiety-ridden nature of the human consciousness. Their use of rhapsodic, telegraphic language and long monologues differs extensively from the Russian futurists' use of symbolic hieroglyphics. Although both of these forms sought a monologue that spoke from the soul, and both saw words not as an end in themselves but a connection to a spiritual awareness, the German expressionists' language

differs from the Russian futurists'. Whereas the expressionists pack their language emotionally, the futurists placed their attention on the "outward form or sensory texture of the linguistic symbol rather than on its communicative value, on sign rather than its object" (Erlich, *Russian Formalism* 27).

III

The significance of viewing Amalrik's *Nose! Nose? No-se!* as an example of a Russian play which seems to incorporate expressionistic techniques is important since it allows this playwright the possibility of exploring artistic and political ideas. It is known Hermann Hesse was influenced by Dostoyevsky's ideas concerning the "collapse of mankind in which the Great War marked an important stage." He felt that Dostoyevsky was inferring that "Man must prepare himself for the new world . . . by examining the secret recesses of his own soul and in the relentless search taking stock of his spiritual position" (Samuel & Thomas, *Expressionism in German Life* 121). German expressionism was not a common occurrence in Russian dramatic literature. Its lack of popularity can be attributed to its spiritual, metaphysical framework or its formalistic structure, neither of which were permissible nor appropriate in an emerging Bolshevistic society. Yet forty years later, Amalrik appears to return to German expressionism as a form to underscore this play's aesthetic and purpose.

Perhaps the most expedient way of defining Amalrik's dramatic form is to relate his play to some specific characteristics and techniques that are commonly associated with German expressionism. From episode four (when Kovalev discovers his nose has disappeared) through episode thirteen (when the nose is reattached), the play's action revolves around the protagonist's search. Kovalev does not engage in a systematic hunt; instead his plight is emotionally charged and reflective of his paranoid, neurotic consciousness. The division of this play into episodes, the solipsistic nature and rhythm of the search are the first indications that German expressionistic characteristics are utilized.

The creation of a dreamlike and nightmarish atmosphere is a central component of this form. Although this quality is embellished usually through production technique, Amalrik's stage directions specifically note certain requirements that create techniques associated with German expressionism. For example, in order to simulate the fractured nature of a nightmare, the set is distorted visually by the use of a revolving stage. In episode three, Amalrik embellishes this mood by indicating "that the proceedings are completely obscured by mist . . ." (192). Throughout the play, streets vanish and are

replaced by interiors; characters appear and disappear; the church is seen both as a church and later upside down as the Commissioner's house; the action sometimes moves backwards; the stage is periodically in darkness with Kovalev as the only illuminated presence. All these techniques, coupled with the most obvious device of initiating and ending Kovalev's search in bed, indicate Amalrik was attempting to create an atmosphere of a vivid dream world or nightmare.

Dialogue, in German expressionism, is unlike more realistic conversation. Instead various staccato, rhapsodic, or febrile patterns form; in particular, in episode eleven a funeral march passes Kovalev mumbling, "Nose . . . nose . . . nose . . . nose" (210). Later, in episode thirteen, the director's voice is heard over a microphone delivering a nonsensical monologue which, at first, is heard in darkness and, later, accompanied by ridiculous action: dancing chairs, glimmering, sinister apparitions and sounds of a religious chant. This poetic moment is broken abruptly by the rhapsodic and mechanical voices of the townspeople:

> *Voices*: Nose . . . nose . . . have you heard, the nose . . . Yes, not just anyone's, a Major's nose . . . it's not some common nose . . . Nose . . . nose . . . A strange thing, though, I'm telling you . . . Saw it with my own eyes . . . Nose . . . nose . . . At Precisely three o'clock . . . A respectable looking gentleman in a dress coat . . . Nose . . . nose . . .
> *Excited Gentleman*: Did you hear? It's in Yuker's store at the moment. It was even seen trying on a woolen shirt! . . .
> *Ladies*: A woolen shirt!
> *They head towards the Yuker's store, the crowd following behind with cries.*
> *Crowd*: Nose! The Nose! A shirt! A shirt! Can you see? There's nothing there . . . (219)

The dialogue continues in this fashion for a period of time and occasionally returns to the rhapsodic, mechanical technique throughout *Nose! Nose? No-se!* The use of this unconventional dialogue evokes a nightmarish atmosphere which helps articulate the protagonist's internal reality.

As previously mentioned, the German expressionists' world is a reflection of the central protagonist's vision. By allowing the subconscious state to speak, a non-rational reality surfaces, complete with disjointed parts: episodes, tableaux, incidents, or stations. The dramatic structure is an attempt to elucidate the dreamer's journey in such a way that their personal plight is

emotionally revealing. In Amalrik's play, as in German expressionism, each of the sixteen episodes focuses on a specific point; furthermore, collectively a structural rhythm is formed that helps promote a dreamlike atmosphere of chaos and confusion.

In this form, characters are seen as types or caricatures devoid of individuality. The playwright's selection of nondescript characters, such as "the barber," "the wife," "the crowd," or the "excited gentleman," and so on is an obvious effort to maneuver the grotesque, faceless personalities found in dreams, as well as reinforce the possibility of archetypal subconscious association. Amalrik's play follows these precepts and even manages to go beyond the general requirements of German expressionism to substantiate this playwright's personal statement.

It is at this point that Amalrik's play is viewed usually as an example of satire or absurdism. For if it is accepted that Kovalev is being portrayed as an example of "the insecure middle class [so] concerned about maintaining economic status" that he has lost his "internal freedom: by submitting to the pressures of external forces," then it seems clear that Amalrik is satirizing the middle-class morality through the absurd search for one's lost nose. Further, a case can be made for the Freudian interpretation that associates the nose as a phallic symbol; here, the satire and absurdist possibilities are clear.

The play's satire and absurdism set a certain tone; however, it can be offered that exploring the play's German expressionistic qualities, especially as they relate to character treatment, structure (dramatic, linguistic, and scenic), and mood, provides an opportunity to go beyond the boundaries of satire and absurdism. For example, the majority of *Nose! Nose? No-se!* from episodes four through fourteen, is written to reveal Kovalev's personal, highly charged emotional state. Objectivity is abandoned to expose a subjective reality that is lacking in conventional logic, reason, or meaning. Although the loss of a nose and the subsequent search is absurd and grotesque, and the Freudian implication equates the disappearance with the loss of self, identity, and position, the dramatic form of the play reveals a framework which grants Amalrik the opportunity to speak directly from his soul. An expressionist reading not only underlines the play's meaning by energizing the satire, but also permits the playwright to make some personal, turbulent, and radical comments that convey his pessimistic outlook and demonstrate, dramatically, what happens to mankind when the individual relinquishes the desire to take responsibility for his own actions.

To categorize Amalrik's play as a dramatization of Gogol's short story, or to place it within the realm of absurdity or satire fundamentally is a distinct possibility, however, it could be reductive and deprive the play of emotional

possibilities. In German expressionism, the protagonist's reality is often tantamount to the playwright's world vision. Amalrik's and Kovalev's lives are hardly similar, however Amalrik certainly perceived what was happening to the Russian society and understood the consequences. For him, personal freedom and identity were to be preserved at all costs. It is evident that he felt the pain of society lost in a confusing maze of bureaucratic hierarchy, self-doubt, and paranoia. The dramatic form, German expressionism, could be interpreted as giving his Gogolian adaption an unsettling, relevant point of view.

One such example is the play's ending. The playwright chooses to have the nose appear as Gogol, as an actor, and at the conclusion, it returns as itself. Interpretation can range from the absurdity of a nose as a character, to the re-establishment of the connection of this play and the 1836 short story, to that of the disheartening fact that in its reappearance nothing really has changed.

Amalrik's ending can be viewed as a pessimistic observation of a society that has learned so little about self and personal responsibility that the twentieth-century writer can draw relationships from an early nineteenth-century short story; concurrently, pessimism is in line with Amalrik's personal views. However, pessimism is not a determining factor of most of German expressionism; instead, with the exception of the German playwright, Sternheim (1878-1942), (who is considered to be a precursor to German expressionism), the traditional expressionistic playwright is thought to be far more optimistic. "The typical Expressionist drama ends with a proclamation of a new and better future" (Samuel & Thomas 39). Although this play can be interpreted as ending on a pessimistic note, Amalrik's use of a predominately expressionistic form allows him the artistic advantage of voicing a passionate appeal to observe and study the effects of a corrupt, insecure, and underdeveloped society that is capable of a total loss of self and identity. On the surface that identity is absurdly and grotesquely depicted as a human nose, and its loss and the search effectively satirizes modern man's banal and nonsensical understanding of self. It is known that Amalrik's personal view is one that values the individual and his responsibility to self. If it can be accepted that by writing *Nose! Nose? No-se!* within the form of German expressionism, he is allowing what remains of the individual the right to feel and speak, it appears that the individual's priorities are bankrupt. However, no matter how absurd, grotesque, or satiric the situation is depicted, through periodic emotional appeal, Amalrik is systematically permitting the action to magnify. By revealing mankind's crisis of consciousness, Amalrik is not ignoring the issue; instead, in retrospect he seems to be accepting the responsibility of attempting to salvage what remains of his society's integrity.

IV

In sum, Amalrik's dissident drama, *Nose! Nose? No-se!*, reflects his view on a society that has lost contact with reason and self and, in turn, has become both paranoid and myopic. By depicting an insecure, confused middle class who have relinquished their personal identity for economic status, and by detailing their irrational behavior through an illogical and disjointed dramatic structure, Amalrik has created a play whose characteristics bear a strong resemblance to German expressionism. These characteristics include: a central character who has forfeited his individuality (the nose) and who is emotionally driven through a series of episodes to encounter a maze of faceless, nameless stereotypes; a solipsistic search that resembles a nightmare, both in terms of its logic and atmosphere; a dialogue that is mechanistic, fragmented, and repetitive; a misty setting and a revolving stage which, in effect, stresses the need to create a reality that is fractured and out-of-control. Amalrik's episodes are each placed in a particular locale, and each stresses a significant point. He sets the episodes in the mayor's house, a commissioner's house, newspaper office and church, or he focuses on the police, doctor, or Mrs. Podtochina and her daughter, thereby directing his satire on one or more of the following: bureaucracy, authority, and love. By treating the satire expressionistically, Kovalev's loss of self is emphasized. He becomes not only a part of a corrupt society, but he is emotionally bankrupt as well.

When an interpretation of *Nose! Nose? No-se!* considers German expressionism, Amalrik leaves his audience with a perception of the character's emotional woes. Although cases can be made that absurdism, satire, and grotesque are equally pertinent and timely, identifying the expressionistic components allows for magnification of any hidden profundity. In other words, if German expressionism energized the apparent absurd, satiric, and grotesque components inherent in Amalrik's play, then uncovering this forceful substructure can give new meaning or vitality to his work.

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Notes

1. See Segel's *Twentieth-Century Russian Drama* (384-97) and Andrei Amalrik, *Nose! Nose? No-se! and Other Plays*, Trans. Daniel Weissbort (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), introduction, for more concerning Amalrik's interest in the avant-garde paintings of Anatoli Zverev and Dmitri Plavinsky, as well as his early reading of the Russian futurist, Velimir

Khlebnikov and the absurdists, Ionesco, Beckett, Sukhova-Kobylin and Kharms.

2. See Susan Jacoby, "Andrei Amalrik, Rebel," *New York Times* 13 for more on Amalrik's letter to Kuznetsov, Soviet author of *Babi Yar*. In part, it reads, "You say that the K. G. B. has persecuted and blackmailed the Russian writer, . . . Of course, what the K. G. B. has done can only be condemned. But it is difficult to discern what the Russian writer has done to oppose this.

The struggle against the K. G. B. is terrible, but what was the threat to the Russian writer, if, before the first step abroad, he had refused to collaborate with the K. G. B.? The writer would not have gone abroad but he would have remained an honest man. By refusing to collaborate in this way, he would have lost a portion—perhaps a considerable portion—of external freedom but would have achieved a greater freedom."

3. See Elizabeth Klosty Beaujour, *The Invisible Land: A Study of the Artistic Imagination of Iurii Olesha* (New York: Columbia UP, 1970) 132. It is known that some experimentation with the dramatic form, expressionism, was evident at the MAT where Stanislavsky attempted to produce *The Life of Man* (1907) expressionistically. In 1927, Tairov produced Eugene O'Neill's expressionistic play, *The Hairy Ape*, at his Kamerny Theatre. Also specific scenes or production techniques in Mayakovsky's plays, especially *The Bedbug*, are reminiscent of expressionism.

4. See Vladimir Markov, *Russian Futurism: A History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1968) for more concerning the Hylaea group who worked with the extensive and complete form, Russian primitivism. Although the futurists' interest in primitivism was shifting emphasis constantly, generally, it can be stated that they were interested in pre-historic man, the inner-process of the child's life, preservation of the childlike in man, the child's vocabulary, poetry, and drawing, and in non-literary folklore.

5. See Walter H. Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1959) for an incisive history of German expressionism. Sokel determined the source, traces the development, and outlines this form's characteristic components.

6. See, for instance, Hasenclever's *Humanity* or Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight*. The Poet, however, in Sorge's *The Begger* does not give the impression of being out-of-control and does engage in rational decision making conversations.

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