

Andrei Rogatchevski / Yngvar Steinholt

**LEONID ANDREEV'S *KRASNYI SMEKH*:
FOUR LOCATIONS OF COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL
MENTAL ILLNESS**

In the early 1900s-1920s, the name of the author Leonid Andreev (1871-1919), unfamiliar to most non-Russians now, rivalled that of his older contemporary Chekhov, in both Russia and the West. Not especially known for the cheerfulness of much of his fictional output, Chekhov was arguably outperformed by Andreev, as far as the overarching mood of dejection and despondency was concerned. Andreev's French translator Serge Persky (1914, 202) claimed: Andreev "takes a place immediately next to Chekhov <...>. Andreev is <...> his spiritual son. But he is a sickly son, who carries the melancholy element to its farthest limit". According to the critic Robert Bruce Lockhart (d'Auvergne 1914, 150), Andreev was "<Russia's> greatest exponent of the abnormal and horrible in life". And, as another British critic put it, "the depth of <...> <Andreev's> pessimism <...> forms his most congenial atmosphere" (Anon 1915, 68).

As has been established by Frederick H. White (2014), Andreev's attraction to things morbid can partly be attributed to a considerable influence on him of the so-called degeneration theory, popular in the second half of XIX century and associated, in the eyes of the general public, primarily with the works by two physicians, the Italian Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) and the Austrian Max Nordau (1849-1923). Lombroso "discovered cranial anomalies in the skulls of criminals, which he used as empirical evidence of atavism, arguing that the ferocious instincts of the criminal were similar to those of inferior animals. <...> The born criminal was a reversion to a distant primitive ancestor" (White 2014, 217). Furthermore, Lombroso found regular evidence of "atavistic retrogression", as he called it, in extraordinarily talented individuals (recognized as such in mankind's modern history), and concluded that "the signs of degeneration are found more frequently in men of genius than even in the insane" (Lombroso 1891, v, vi).

While Lombroso focused mostly on the biological manifestations of atavistic retrogression, Nordau – a renowned author and journalist – concentrated on what he thought were the aesthetic ones. In his famous *Degeneration* (*Entartung*, 1892-93; English translation 1895), dedicated to Lombroso, Nordau sets

out to analyse the latest tendencies in fine art, classical music and belles-lettres that collectively anticipated, or even featured, a kind of “Dusk of the Nations, in which all suns and all stars are gradually waning, and mankind with all its institutions and creations is perishing in the midst of a dying world” (Nordau 1898, 2). Nordau ascribed such tendencies, on the part of the relevant artists and their followers, chiefly to “the confluence of two well-defined conditions of <psychiatric> disease, <...> viz. degeneration (degeneracy) and hysteria, of which the minor stages are designated as neurasthenia” (Nordau 1898, 15).

Nordau accepted Lombroso’s findings with regard to the link between geniuses and mental disorders, but differed from him in the assessment of the role that such flawed geniuses play in society. Lombroso opined that “highly-gifted degenerates are an active force in the progress of mankind” (as paraphrased in Nordau 1898, 24) but Nordau disagreed: “they do, alas! frequently exercise a deep influence, but <...> always a baneful one” (24). In his book *Paradoxes* (*Paradoxe* 1885; English translation 1895), Nordau characterized as counterintuitive the pessimism that flawed geniuses habitually purveyed. According to Nordau, the “genuine scientific pessimism <...> does not preclude the greatest enjoyment of real life. <...> All the great poets of “the world is out of joint” style have been deranged organisms. <...> The primal instinct of man from which all his ideas and actions proceed is optimism” (Nordau 1895, 15, 17).

As memoirs of Andreev’s friends and his private diary testify, he read both Lombroso and Nordau in Russian translation.¹ In his 1922 reminiscences of Andreev, Maksim Gor’kii quotes Andreev as saying: “I, brother, am a decadent, a degenerate, a sick person. But Dostoevskii was also sick, like all great people. There is a little book <...> about genius and madness <by Lombroso>, which proves that genius is a psychiatric disease! That book ruined me. If I had not read it, I would have been simpler. But now I know that I am almost a genius, yet I am not sure if I am crazy enough. Do you understand, I am pretending to myself that I am crazy to persuade myself that I am talented” (White 2006b, 29; translation slightly amended).

Andreev’s diary entry of 20 November 1892 is a jocular response to a quote from the German composer Christoph Willibald Gluck, used by Lombroso in the third chapter of his *Man of Genius*. Gluck apparently claimed that he “loved money, wine and fame for an excellent reason: the first enabled him to obtain the second, and the second, by inspiring him, procured him fame” (Lombroso 1891, 55). Andreev comments: “I am reading Lombroso these days and coming

¹ Both Lombroso and (especially) Nordau were well translated into Russian. *The Man of Genius* (*Genio e follia*, 1864) first came out as *Genial’nost’ i pomeshatel’stvo* (Genius and Madness), and *Paradoxes* as *V poiskakh za istinnoi* (Searching for the Truth), in 1885 and 1887 respectively, both in St Petersburg. *Degeneration* first came out as *Vyrozhdenie* in 1894, in two different translations, in St Petersburg and Kiev.

to the conclusion that vodka is necessary for me to become a genius. I cannot agree more with Gluck!"²

Andreev was somewhat more critical towards Nordau. Reacting to Nordau's statement, quoted above, about optimism being a dominant mood for humans because even pessimists can feel joyous, Andreev says, in his diary entry of 16 March 1890, that there is a difference between theoretical and practical pessimism, and that people who feel pessimistic tend not to act upon their feelings. Those few individuals who do act upon such feelings ostensibly end up in jail, or on the gallows, or die from hunger. Speaking of himself as an example, Andreev claims: "In my opinion, neither honesty nor treachery (*podlost'*) exists <...> – but were I to put these pessimistic views of mine into practice, I'd be arrested tomorrow" (LRA, MS 606, E2).

In another diary entry, of 1 April 1890, Andreev takes issue with Nordau's point that pessimism as an articulation of life's aimlessness and senselessness does not withstand scrutiny. According to Nordau (1895, 9), "before we declare the way in which the world is managed to be contrary to reason, we must first assume that it has some purpose, that it is working toward some special aim or other. <...> This presumption of an aim, however, is entirely arbitrary". To this Andreev says that even a discovery and an incontrovertible proof that such an aim exists would not make him an optimist because he knows that he would only live until he is forty or fifty. Andreev continues: "It would have been fine had I lived for forty years as a content person, if not a happy one. Yet, no matter how often one is blinded by illusions, the totality of painful occasions <in one's life> does not equal the aggregate of joyful ones, and the impact (*koefitsient*) of the former is much stronger than that of the latter" (LRA, MS 606, E2).

In the context of professing such a bleak vision of his own (and others') existence, it is not altogether surprising to learn that in 1887-94 Andreev made several suicide attempts and in 1902 was officially diagnosed as an acute neurasthenic, or someone suffering from nervous exhaustion. As a well-informed man of letters soon revealed to the reading public, Andreev was "of a very emotional temperament and liable to attacks of nervous depression and melancholy, which, on more than one occasion, necessitated his placing himself under special treatment for the cure of acute nervous trouble. There can be no doubt that his personal experiences played a part in those of his stories which give us a presentment of the psychology of certain of his mentally unbalanced characters" (Lindén 1906, 216-17).

Given that at the time neurasthenia was considered by some a sign of "an individual's physical, moral and psychological devolution" and "a hereditary de-

² Leeds Russian Archive (henceforth LRA), MS 606, E6. All translations from Russian are ours, unless indicated otherwise. It is worth pointing out that Nordau (1898, 34-35) believed alcohol consumption to be one of the causes of degeneration. According to Gor'kii, Andreev suffered from hereditary alcoholism.

generative illness that would eventually lead to idiocy and possible death” (White 2014, 24, 263), Andreev could have become a typical case study for both Lombroso and Nordau. However, since these physicians detected symptoms of mental instability and degeneration in Schumann, Baudelaire, Swift, Newton, Rousseau, E T A Hoffman, Schopenhauer and Gogol (Lombroso 1891, 66-99), as well as Tolstoi, Wagner, Ibsen, Nietzsche and Zola (Nordau 1898, 144-213, 338-506), Andreev would have found himself in a rather distinguished company.³

A prophet of doom, Andreev lived to see some of his worst fears come true. His story *Krasnyi smekh* (The Red Laugh, 1905), written in October-November 1904, describes a combat-related contagious epidemic of insanity engulfing an unidentified country, which is at war with another unidentified country. The war develops into a murderous orgy which spreads well beyond the war zone and affects many civilians far away from the battlefield, with the borderline between the dead and the living often obliterated.⁴ Even though in 1910 an authoritative journalist and scholar claimed that *Krasnyi smekh* had been forgotten and “would hardly be re-read even by the most devoted fiction fans” (Arabazhin 1910, 53), Andreev’s story actually predicted not only the 1905-07 Russian revolution but also the Great War as a catalyst for the East/Central European revolutions, and remains relevant to the present day.

Krasnyi smekh’s first Russian edition sold 60,000 copies, which is a remarkable achievement by any standards. Translated into all the main European languages almost immediately,⁵ it may well have influenced Abel Gance’s famous film *J’accuse* (1919), especially its memorable sequence of how fallen soldiers pursue their civilian friends and relatives from beyond the grave.⁶ The story

³ Incidentally, Nordau wrote: “The degenerate and insane are the predestined disciples of Schopenhauer and Hartmann” (Nordau 1898, 21). Arthur Schopenhauer and Eduard von Hartmann heavily influenced Andreev in his precocious youth, see Koz’menko 2010 and Skorokhod 2013, 38-42.

⁴ Cf. Andreev’s description (Andreev 1905, 4) of an army in retreat: “All these people marching silently on <...> <were> torpid from fatigue and heat”. The word “torpid” stands for “omertvevshie” in the Russian original, which literally means “necrotic”. One soldier “was dead but his back was as red as if he were alive” (ibid., 5). Another soldier “was lying looking like a corpse and dreaming of a medal” (ibid., 17). The faces of servicemen drinking tea during a lull in the military action “seemed yellow, like the faces of the dead” (ibid., 20). This list of examples can go on and on.

⁵ For an immediate reaction to *Krasnyi smekh* from e.g. the Finnish literary critic Emil Hasselblatt and the Austrian pacifist Baroness von Suttner (a Nobel Peace Prize winner), see Hellman 2015, 49-50.

⁶ Cf. *Krasnyi smekh*’s concluding scene of the dead taking over the narrators’ house: “on the floor lay a naked, light pink body with its head thrown back. And instantly at its side there appeared a second, and a third. And the earth threw them up one after the other, and soon the orderly rows of light pink dead bodies filled all the rooms” (Andreev 1905, 116).

retained its significance up until the late Soviet period, as reflected in the eponymous song by the *Instruktsiia po vyzhivaniiu* / Survival Guide punk band (in 1990 famously performed by Egor Letov). The songwriters sensed the forthcoming collapse of the USSR and its disorderly, often bloody aftermath, and used Andreev's imagery to sum up what would happen. *Krasnyi smekh* can also be read as a proto-zombie apocalypse scenario, still resonant today in the context of a triumphant onslaught of illiberal populism.⁷

How to explain such an extraordinary clairvoyance and long-lasting relevance? A spaces-of-illness approach, compounded by (contemporary and modern, partially tentative) psychiatric diagnoses of Andreev and his selected characters and their prototypes, may give us a clue.⁸ Generally speaking, a detailed look at a particular space which gives rise to a disease may provide us with an insight into the nature, progress and prospects of the disease. This applies to locations both inside and outside the human body. Unlike the medical viewpoint that normally seeks to establish facts about such locations in order to cure the patient if possible (or at least to make the patient feel better), the fictional viewpoint deviates from reality partly because the author does not necessarily know enough about the medical side of things, but also because s/he usually invents an imaginary reality corresponding to a certain message directed at the reader, even though this message may possess a shocking value that could make the reader unwell.

Krasnyi smekh consists of two parts, one of them ostensibly written by a wealthy and sophisticated artillery officer suffering from war injuries and traumas (providing an insider's perspective on the war), and another, by his younger civilian brother (providing an outsider's perspective on the war-related events in the war-free zone), after the mentally disturbed and heavily wounded older

⁷ Cf.: "We, the living, wandered about like lunatics' (Andreief 1905, 8), after a three-day battle. And another example: "Yesterday I read an article full of suspicion, stating that there were many spies and traitors amongst the people, warning us to be cautious and mindful, and that the wrath of the people would not fail to find out the guilty" (ibid., 79).

⁸ According to White (2014, 137), in addition to its obvious anti-war reading, *Krasnyi smekh* should be interpreted within the illness narrative theory (when the story of an illness is told from an (auto)biographical viewpoint, see Kleinman 1988, Frank 1995, Charon 2008 and Jurecic 2012), namely thus: "Andreev would be ashamed of his neurasthenic condition and might try to contextualize it in the "male" arena of war. By transferring his illness experience into a military context, he associates his experience with neurasthenia with valor and duty as opposed to hysteria and weak-mindedness. The sufferer is heroic in his struggle with mental illness, not frail and unable to cope with the demands of life". Tellingly, opinions that *Krasnyi smekh* belonged to an illness narrative had been voiced long before the term "illness narrative" was coined. For example, the influential critic Viktor Burenin claimed that *Krasnyi smekh* was a case of "sheer literary epilepsy" (Burenin 1905).

brother is sent back home to recover. The older brother soon goes completely insane and dies (of progressive palsy, according to Mumortsev 1910, 3), while the younger brother is trying to fight off, in vain, the collective madness that closes in on him. The apocalyptic reality which both brothers are involuntarily immersed in gives rise to their disturbing visions, and it is not always possible to determine if such visions take place genuinely or are a product of sick imagination.

Because of the two narrators' (and other characters') significant mental problems, both temporal and spatial features of *Krasnyi smekh*'s world (as it is reflected in the narrative) are gravely distorted, by comparison with what the reader is normally accustomed to in everyday life. However, the temporal dimensions, although fragmented (the story consists of nineteen undated sequences of various length), nevertheless broadly conform to a linear progression, to portray simultaneously the unrelenting spread of the disease (hence the linearity) and the ensuing chaos (hence the fragmentation).⁹ As for the spatial dimensions, they are altered somewhat more radically (though never beyond recognition), so that the Russian scholar Iuliana Pykhtina (2012, 70) even terms *Krasnyi smekh*'s imaginary locations a "psychological space", or an "individually coloured image of the world".

Four principal spaces of illness are identifiable in *Krasnyi smekh*, two of them external and two internal. The external ones consist of, first, an unspecified war zone of an unnamed military conflict that has far-reaching consequences; and second, the spreading of mass madness from the conflict's frontline to behind the lines and much further, involving areas thousands of miles away from the actual fighting. The internal ones include, first, a deformed perception of reality from a fictional madman's point of view (exemplified by a number of scenes to be examined below); and second, Andreev's own fictionalization and amplification of historical facts and tendencies as an individual diagnosed with a mental disorder.

Andreev's portrayal of the war has frequently, and no less in retrospect, been described as generalised, hyperbolic and exaggerated, and marked by fin-de-siècle decadence and (ultra-) impressionism (see, e.g., Shishkina 2017, 604, 616). Interestingly, scholarly commentary on *Krasnyi smekh* by contemporary psychiatrists and psychologists did not necessarily support such views. Thus, the psychiatrist Aleksandr Mumortsev (1910, 7-15), argued that the experience of war was *realistically* represented by Andreev through the minds of two brother

⁹ As if in support of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's observation (2006, 244) that "the tension between a thematization of disintegration and a writing that preserves qualities of narrative order may be a dramatization of the struggle between an acceptance of fragmentation and the need to overcome it by creating a coherent narrative". Specifically with regard to *Krasnyi smekh*, White believes (2014, 137) that the story is "Andreev's attempt to bring narrative coherence to his own struggle with neurasthenia".

characters suffering from a developing mental illness. Based on Andreev's correspondence with the author and physician Vikentii Veresaev, who spent time at the Russo-Japanese war as a conscripted military doctor and wrote about it, Woodward (1969, 103) asserts that Andreev was concerned with the ongoing war in particular and regarded it as "even more senseless and criminal" than previous wars. This suggests that a more direct comparison between Andreev's story and the theatre of war during the Russo-Japanese conflict is warranted.

Because, as Woodward asserts, Andreev is presenting not the war itself, but a specific response to it (affected by madness), such a comparison is no straightforward task. This partly explains why literary scholars have traditionally been somewhat reluctant to attempt it. History books account surprisingly sparsely for this war. To Western historians it was perhaps too remote and obscure, while for Russian historians it represented a painful and humiliating defeat surrounded by a number of major scandals. For post-1945 Japan, eager to distance itself from its imperialist past, it became something of a historical taboo, and Soviet historians, in accordance with Marxist-Leninist historical determinism, tended to focus on its role in what they regarded as the most important historic events: the revolutions of 1905 and 1917.¹⁰

Nonetheless, the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 marked the introduction of modern XX century warfare. The impact of heavy artillery, machine guns, mines, trench battles, barbed wire and chemical weaponry, often combined with dated military strategy, deeply shocked contemporary observers, military and civilian leadership, and the respective civil societies. It should have warned European powers of the dangers of the advances in military technology, but sadly the horrors of the Russo-Japanese war would instead be repeated on a much larger scale in 1914-18. This was by no means caused by an absence of Western observers. Interestingly, eyewitness accounts by military men and journalists alike often resonate with the same "madness and horror" found in concentrated form in Andreev's fictional text. Thus, the British General Sir Ian Hamilton describes the frozen battlefields of Hill 203 outside Port Arthur shortly after its surrender:

A man's head sticking up out of the earth, or a leg or an arm or a piece of a man's body lying across my path are sights which custom has enabled me to face without blanching. But here the corpses do not so much appear to be escaping from the ground as to be the ground itself. Everywhere there are bodies, or portions of bodies, flattened out and stamped into the surface of the earth as if they formed part of it. (quoted in Connaughton 2004, 248)

¹⁰ This particular approach carries some validity with some historians in the West, too (see, for example, Jacob 2017).

The seasoned correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph*, David James, wrote of the same battlefield:

The sight of those trenches heaped up with arms and legs and dismembered bodies all mixed together and then frozen into compact masses, the expressions on the faces of the scattered heads of decapitated bodies, the stupendous magnitude of the concentrated horror, impressed itself indelibly into the utmost recesses of my unaccustomed brain. (quoted in Connaughton 2004, 247)

The accounts by Russian war participants/correspondents and medics also openly reflected on the cruelty and brutality witnessed, as well as the military action's immediate and long-term psychological effects.¹¹ They discussed issues such as the consequences of battles that stretched over several days, mass death under hitherto unseen conditions, and the damage inflicted by modern warfare on soldiers' physical and mental health.

Given the sheer impact of shock and horror created by the Russo-Japanese war, it seems somewhat puzzling that some literary analysts have been keen to stress how Andreev's text deals with war in general and not so much with that particular conflict itself. The violence and brutality of technological warfare was a novelty, and until 1914 the Russo-Japanese conflict remained the only example of its impact on a larger scale. In her discussion of reality and imagination in *Krasnyi smekh*, N. I. Soboleva (2001) gives an illuminating background for the story's genesis, particularly Andreev's correspondence with Maksim Gor'kii from November 1904, when the latter recommended the inclusion of more references to concrete events unfolding at the time. Andreev only partly, and reluctantly, conceded to Gor'kii's requests.¹² Soboleva appears to take this as an indication of how Andreev wished to write about war on a general and principal level. However, Andreev, confident that the contemporary reader would be painfully familiar with the shocking reports from the front, might also have had purely aesthetic and rhetorical reasons for keeping his distance from real events. He did not need to state the obvious, all he needed was to make the subtlest of allusions.

Far removed from the events of 1904, it becomes difficult for today's reader to recognize Andreev's subtle hints, and this affects literary scholars, too. Thus, Soboleva argues that Andreev referred loosely and sporadically to three battles: Liaoyang, Sha Ho and Mukden. While there are clear resemblances, indeed, between the key scenes in the story's Part One and the bloody weeks of Liaoyang, the battle of Sha Ho took place only in October 1904, when the climate

¹¹ See, for example, the reports by *Birzhevye vedomosti*, *Russkii invalid*, *Russkoe slovo* and *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, as well as specialised studies in *Voенно-медицинский журнал*, quoted in Shishkina 2017, 597-604.

¹² For details of their correspondence on the matter, see Shishkina 2017, 588-91.

and weather would have been very different to the conditions described by Andreev. As for Mukden, this campaign began only in March 1905, a full four months after *Krasnyi smekh* had been completed.

In our examining of the first external space, the theatre of war, we would therefore like to keep in mind that to the contemporary reader, the events and realities of the ongoing war would be crystal clear. What today appears as Andreev's very scarce and subtle references to current events would have resonated with specific knowledge in the contemporary reader's mind. This is not to say that Andreev's references necessarily or consistently describe (or hint at) actual events. Rather, his vagueness enables his readers to associate the narrative with whatever knowledge they have of the war. Remarkably, where comparisons of fictional texts with the real events that such texts are based upon often make them clash with historical facts, *Krasnyi smekh* seems little affected by the amount of historical detail available to the reader. The reader's detailed knowledge enforces the link between narrative and real event, if only up to a certain point. If the reader prefers, the text can be read as complementary to historical events, even chronologically.

Connaughton 2004 (first published 1988) offers an exhaustive battle-for-battle account by a military historian, and can be used as a comparative material for Andreev's own descriptions of war. Bringing in archive material from Western observers, it complements and expands the picture drawn by the contemporary Russian sources discussed in Shiskina (2017, 595-605). A reading of Andreev's and Connaughton's texts side by side demonstrates how the message of *Krasnyi smekh* remains constant, independently of the author's and his reader's respective knowledge of the war. Let us then, as an experiment, leave aside for a moment the question of what Andreev read and knew about the war, and see how his text responds to and accommodates a detailed historical knowledge, drawn from the source (Connaughton) that Andreev could not have known at the time because it had yet to be written.

The Japanese forces landed three battalions in Korea prior to the declaration of war on 10 February 1904, and from 17-22 February added three full divisions. The climate at this time of year was cold and wet and the spring thaw represented a challenge to both warring sides. At the earliest stages of the war, Russia relied on troops from its eastern provinces, but towards summer, the Russian Army increasingly brought in enforcements from the more populous western regions via the freshly-built Trans-Siberian Railway. This could explain why Andreev's main character, an artillery officer from the European part of Russia, is introduced to the reader in the midst of the summer heat. Just previously, by the end of May, after the fall of Nanshan on the Eastern Chinese Railway, the Japanese offensive had created two fronts, one pushing south-west towards the Russian naval base of Port Arthur (Liu Shun), the other advancing north along the railroad towards what would also become sites of major battles:

Telissu (13-15 May 1904), Liaoyang (23 August – 5 September 1904) and, ultimately, Mukden (March 1905).

When read alongside Connaughton's account, Andreev's fragmented narrative appears to fall into step with historical events some time during the retreat following the battle of Telissu and actions leading up to, and including, the battle of Liaoyang, where in Fragment VI, the main character and first narrator loses both legs in a friendly fire incident. These early fragments do not resist a direct comparison with the episodes of the ongoing war. Then, in Fragment VII, we learn in retrospect from a third party that the train evacuating the wounded hit a mine, killing everybody on board. This introduces a move away from the initial eyewitness account, as well as away from historical events. In Part Two, as the narrator's function is taken over by the first narrator's younger brother, the war references change correspondingly from an eyewitness testimony to one increasingly based on media reports. Thus, they will be discussed below in relation to the second external space of illness.

Artillery had played a decisive role in the battle of Telissu, and continued to do so at Liaoyang, also in the intense fighting around Manju Yama (Rice Cake Hill). This may have motivated the military occupation ascribed to Andreev's first narrator. The beginning of the summer heat, interspersed with fog and rain, also complements such a timeline. The Japanese had just changed from their blue winter into khaki summer uniforms. Notably, Andreev does not refer to the "correct" uniform colour. Instead, in Fragment VI, the narrator describes the enemy's khaki uniform as "orange" and the Russian grey as "red". Keeping in mind that any colour should be affected by the red light originating in the overpowering sun from Fragment I, the colour shift in Fragment VI is not necessarily an impressionistic one. It could be part of Andreev's realistic depiction of a specific colour scheme through the prism of madness.

Further references that match Andreev's narrative are heat and barbed wire. In parts of the frontline, fighting was desperate and, having run out of ammunition, soldiers would engage in close combat armed with rocks (Connaughton 2004, 125). Scenes like these were repeated at Manju Yama. Another potential match between Andreev's and Connaughton's narratives occurs on 24 July 1904 when, during the Russian withdrawal towards Liaoyang, temperatures exceeded +40° C. Issued with hats that failed to protect them from the sun, Russian soldiers succumbed to heat exhaustion and cases of death from sunstroke were reported (*ibid.*, 146). In Andreev's narrative, heat and sunstroke become the first source for the madness affecting the soldiers.

In Fragment I, Andreev's main character is introduced in a scenario of troops' withdrawal in an extreme heat. The effect of heat and exhaustion on the mental condition of the artillery officer and his fellow soldiers is portrayed as a first, individual stage in the development of madness. Fragment II, set in a sudden pause in the battle, created by a sudden downpour, elaborates on this devel-

opment introducing another source of severe mental stress, i.e. the duration of battle and the continuous noise of artillery over several days and nights (see Shishkina 2017, 597). Previously battles seldom lasted more than a day, whereas the battle of Liaoyang spanned two weeks. During this time the same soldiers could be involved in as many as four to five major attacks in 36 hours (Connaughton 2004, 201). The psychological effects of all this were recorded at the time. Connaughton quotes an unnamed Russian officer's account of the Russian defeat at Liaoyang: "Our soldiers were falling with fatigue and exhaustion; their nerves failed to perform their duties; we were compelled to take into account this psychological factor" (ibid., 202). From Fragment III onwards, the individual madness that the main character observes in himself, in his surrounding comrades, and in their accounts, develops into a collective madness. This mass madness is elaborated upon in Fragments IV and V, before Fragment VI depicts a friendly fire incident, in which the main protagonist is seriously wounded.

Again, without excluding other similar incidents, Andreev's narrative shows considerable overlaps with historical events. During the third week of battle around Liaoyang, on 2 September 1904, the severely wounded Major General V I Orlov attempted to gather the remains of his brigade by Post 8 on the railroad, halfway between the frontline and Liaoyang. A group of soldiers approaching the meeting point from the east mistook those already gathered there for the enemy and opened fire:

All around the post the cry "Japanese! Japanese!" was heard. [Lieutenant General, Baron G K] Stackelberg [...] had his echelon transport located nearby. It was blasted with shrapnel and the crazed and wounded horses dispersed all over the plain, taking with them the First Corps' wagons. Infantrymen fired at anything that moved, including one another. Orlov, who was heard to say "I am finished", was evacuated back to Russia where he recovered from his wounds but not his disgrace. (Connaughton 2004, 196-97)

Perhaps more striking than any potential matching detail is how the military historian's account vibrates with the same sentiment of madness and horror that is isolated and cultivated in *Krasnyi smekh*. To connect Fragment VI to the above-named or another high-profile friendly fire incident is a possibility left entirely to the reader.¹³ Very much in line with Woodward's observations, whilst boiling down the narrative to aspects of "madness and horror" and focusing on madness as a response to war, Andreev makes numerous, more or less subtle allusions to the specific, ongoing conflict. The Russo-Japanese war is indeed weighing on his mind, to the point that a speculative reading could set

¹³ Thus, friendly fire inflicted around one hundred casualties on the Tsarist troops during the battle of the Yalu river in late April – early May 1904 (see Jacob 2017, 22).

the first part of his narrative between 24 July and 2 September 1904. Yet, Andreev's focus on the development in the mental state of his protagonists not only kept his narrative open for individual interpretation, but also possibly helped *Krasnyi smekh* to pass censorship and reach publication (after all, madmen cannot be held responsible for their unflattering view of the war).¹⁴

Part Two continues to make references to events that may well also allude to the Battle of Liaoyang, but these are increasingly detached from the first protagonist's eyewitness accounts and related to rumours and media reports. The comparison of the Part One storyline and the actual events during the battle of Liaoyang might have alerted us to certain key connections between Andreev's work and the ongoing war, but with these connections comes a false illusion of order in the chaos. The fragmented form and brutal scenes of *Krasnyi smekh* seek to enhance this sense of chaos. Notably, a condensed selection of scenes from Liaoyang taken from Connaughton's account (2004, 170-198) produces a similar effect.

Casualties at Liaoyang amounted to 3,611 killed and missing and 14,301 wounded Russians, as well as 5,537 killed and missing and 18,063 wounded Japanese (Connaughton 2004, 203). The terrain around Manju Yama was surrounded by unfinished barbed wire fences, mined hillsides and machine gun nests. In this environment, repeated attacks and counter-attacks were launched, often developing into close fighting with bayonets. On 30 August 1904, the Japanese 6th Division stormed the Russian machine guns, suffering devastating losses as row after row of men were mowed down, causing their commanding officer to collapse into madness. On the following day, the Japanese artillery bombarded their own, rapidly advancing forces. The Russians, out of ammunition, counter-attacked with bayonets. The *Times* correspondent described how, after the attack, fallen Russian and Japanese soldiers were lying piled up, intermingled in the trenches.

On 2 September, during the failed, large-scale Russian counter-attack at Fangshen, Orlov's battalion was crushed, losing 1,450 men. This opened the way for the 250 guns-strong Japanese artillery to bombard the Russian settlement at Liaoyang directly – including the railway station, used to evacuate non-combatants and the wounded. The bombardments caused mass panic and looting. Following the above-mentioned friendly fire incident on 2 September, involving Orlov and Stackelberg, the latter launched a night offensive after nearly five hours of preparatory artillery bombardment. The advancing Russians became disoriented in the darkness and dense kaoliang weeds and some attacked their own with shots and bayonets. By 9 pm the situation had deteriorated to the

¹⁴ According to Iezuitova (2010, 149), however, the story got through censorship only because the publisher Konstantin Piatnitskii deliberately gave it to censors on 23 December 1904 hoping that they would be drunk and therefore, in Gor'kii's words, "more freedom-loving".

point that the opposing forces were intermingled in the darkness, the Japanese relying on buglers and the Russians singing the national anthem to identify themselves. Two Japanese battalions engaged in bayonet combat and could not be separated until their orchestra began playing the regimental march. Eventually, General Okasaki ordered his bugler to signal “cease fire”, which some Russians interpreted as “withdrawal”. Sir Ian Hamilton, describing the Russian dead after Manju Yama, can be said to subtly complement Andreev’s depictions of mass madness at work on the battlefield:

When I stepped forward and viewed the western declivity my heart for a moment stood still with horror. Never have I seen such a scene. Such a mad jumble of arms and accoutrements mingled with the bodies of those who so lately bore them, arrested, cut short in the fury of their assault, and now, for all their terrible, menacing attitudes so very, very quiet. (quoted in Connaughton 2004, 198)

Even the military professional, faced with the horrors of modern warfare, has to invoke a concept of madness here in order to describe what he has witnessed. Andreev takes this concept to its logical conclusion: if war is madness, the rational human brain is ill-suited to describing it. This is why *Krasnyi smekh* expands from the depiction of an ongoing conflict into a war heterotopia (to use Foucault’s 1984 term denoting simultaneously a real place and a placeless place) – or, in other words, becomes timeless. The storyline and scenes break down into fragments and the narration is taken over by the mad. The first, and through him, the second narrator experience a total breakdown of civilisation, a mass madness symbolised by the infectious Red Laugh, which reduces all human purpose to the joy of killing and maiming for the sake of it. Yet the second narrator himself is not completely absorbed by this mass madness. His is a visionary insanity, which allows him to recognize the full threat of war to human civilisation. The second narrator, thousands of kilometers away from the front, observes how this mass madness from the distant war begins seeping into civilian society via the second external space of illness, the media. Where reason fails to grasp reality, the narrator’s visionary madness becomes the most trustworthy perspective, representing a form of hyperrealism (i.e. a highly detailed imitation of reality, which looks more realistic than the reality it seeks to imitate). Similarly to how it happens with the uniforms’ colour shift (discussed above), this hyperrealism also manifests itself in the references to casualties in Part Two.

The chaos and confusion in the battlefields, combined with the shocking scale of the bloodshed, made over-reporting of death tolls in the media an additional feature of the war. Thus, Reuters claimed the combined losses by both sides to be 50,000 fallen at Liaoyang only, while *The Daily Mail* somewhat later

estimated that the first year of warfare alone¹⁵ had cost 240,000 lives (Shishkina 2017, 599)¹⁶. In comparison to these numbers, Andreev's narrator comes forth as quite sober in his estimates. In Fragment XI he refers to "the last terrible battle" where tens of thousands perished; in Fragment XIV, the newspaper boy shouts about a lost battle, massive casualties and "4,000 dead"; and finally, Fragment XVI mentions 30,000 dead. If the first and last of these numbers refer to, for instance, the Port Arthur frontline in the autumn of 1904, they come forth as pretty accurate. Similarly, the number 4,000 corresponds to losses in the October 1904 battle of Sha Ho, which saw roughly 3,000 Russian and 1,000 Japanese dead (Connaughton 2004, 272).

Even so, the numbers are not relevant to Andreev's narrator in the form of clear references to concrete events. Rather, the main focus of Part Two is its observation of how mass madness spreads from the war zone into civil society by way of the media. Already in the ninth and final fragment of Part One, the effect of news media is described by the younger brother in conversation with the first narrator:

Every day, at about the same hour, the papers close the circuit and all mankind gets a shock. This simultaneousness of feelings, tears, thoughts, sufferings and horror deprives me of all stay, and I am like a chip of wood tossing about on the waves, or a bit of dust in a whirlwind. I am forcibly torn away from all that is habitual, and there is one terrible moment every morning when I seem to hang in the air over the black abyss of insanity. And I shall fall into it, I must fall into it. You don't know all, brother. You don't read the papers and much is held back from you. (Andrieief 1905, 60-61)

The newspapers instruct the younger brother that he "should go mad". The media are presented throughout Part Two as infested, and siding with the spreading madness. Thus, Fragment XII highlights how the newspapers, as they shout for reinforcements and more bloodshed, remain silent about the many hearses observed around town. They invade the narrator's thoughts and replace his with their own. The newspaper boy shouting out death tolls in Fragment XIV wakes the narrator from thinking the war could be just a dream. Whilst calling for more blood, the newspapers dutifully print long lists of casualties (Fragment XVIII). In the Last Fragment the full effect of the news media takeover of people's thoughts plays out, when a peace demonstration turns into a violent mass fight. Surrounded by crowds infected by the Red Laugh, the narrator flees in a paranoid scenario reminiscent of a prototypical zombie movie.

¹⁵ This estimate excludes several major battles during the last stage of the war, such as Mukden and Tsushima.

¹⁶ The total number of the dead on both sides during the entire war is generally held to be between 130,000 and 178,000 (Necrometrics).

Our investigation of the two external spaces of madness suggest that Andreev's two madmen are not so much vehicles of fin-de-siècle decadence and (ultra-)impressionism (see the already quoted Shishkina 2017, 604, 616) and that his portrayal of the war is hyperbolic and exaggerated,¹⁷ *as well as* reliable and quite realistic (as suggested above by Mumortsev 1910, 7-15) – or, as we would prefer to put it, hyperrealistic, partly shaped by Andreev's early realization of the dangers of mass hysteria, and how it can be fomented by the mass media and the rumour mill. Faced with an all-absorbing mass madness, where objective accounts become impossible and the most natural and human response to events is to go insane, the most reliable and truthful account of war becomes that of a visionary madman.

Although the detailed and extensive description of collective madness constitutes *Krasnyi smekh*'s main innovation in the representation of insanity in Russian (and possibly European and world) fiction,¹⁸ the story paid attention to causes and effects of mental illness at an individual level, too. The opening fragment already includes the first narrator's impression, produced by extreme tiredness and intense overheating, "that it was not a head that swayed upon my shoulders, but a strange and extraordinary globe, heavy and light, belonging to somebody else, and horrible" (Andreief 1905, 3). As it is the narrator's mind that is first and foremost affected by the mental disorder, it is only natural that one of the first mentions of the disease refers to the man's head, which becomes the principal repository and emitter of the growing symptoms of psychosis, and therefore a location of illness.

Furthermore, it is remarkable that the head, because of its round shape, is compared to the globe ("shar" in the Russian original). The comparison evokes an association with the planet Earth ("zemnoi shar" in Russian) and thus links the microcosm (i.e. an individual human being) with the macrocosm (at a planetary level), indicating that sensations emerging inside a person's brain form the picture of the entire world for this person, however contradictory (e.g. "heavy" and "light" simultaneously) this picture may be. At the same time, the narrator's distance from these sensations is established ("belonging to someone else"), because Andreev needs a modicum of objectivity in the narrator's chronicle of progressing madness (including the narrator's own anamnesis), and therefore delays the moment when the narrator fully succumbs to his debilitating disease until approximately half way through the story, when the second narrator takes over – fulfilling very much the same function and eventually arriving pretty much at the same result as the first narrator.

¹⁷ Cf. "*Krasnyi smekh* – one of Andreev's most "over the top" (*chrezmerykh*) works" (Iezuitova 2010, 145).

¹⁸ As for real life, collective war-related madness (engulfing the territories that were not directly affected by military action) has been a subject of psychiatric research since at least the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 (see Shaikevich 1907, 278, 280).

Yet before the first narrator becomes incoherent, he does observantly register the severe damage that war inflicts on people's mental faculties and nervous system. This damage can be summarized in one sentence, uttered by an unknown soldier from Fragment IV: "aim at what you will, all hit my brain" (Andreief 1905, 23). Medical science offers no cure to those afflicted by insanity. As a student paramedic puts it in Fragment V, "The doctor is mad also" (Andreief 1905, 30). It is indeed a doctor who in Fragment VI dreams of achieving world domination by means of a near total annihilation, which is rather unexpected from a member of the most humane profession:

When my senses leave me entirely, <...> I will gather those brave ones, those knights-errant, around me, and declare war to the whole world. <...> Who said one must not kill, burn, or rob? We will kill and burn and rob. We, a joyous careless band of braves, we will destroy all; their buildings, universities and museums, and merry as children, full of fiery laughter, we will dance on the ruins. <...> And when I <...> will begin to reign over the whole world, its sole lord and master, what a glad laugh will ring over the whole universe. (Andreief 1905, 48-49)

As if to demonstrate that in the world governed by war virtually everything, including the customary moral and ethical values, has been turned upside down, this doctor performs a handstand, which becomes an emblematic expression of the topsy-turvy reality inside his (and most other characters') psyche. It is hardly surprising, then, that the best remedy available for a disturbed brain seems to be suicide by a bullet through the head, as committed by the student paramedic from Fragment V. Self-destruction by friendly fire is also mentioned repeatedly. Needless to say, any war is an act of self-destruction by humanity, which is what *Krasnyi smekh* graphically illustrates. In another emblematic scene (stretched across Fragments IX and X), the first narrator dies soon after his ability for articulate self-expression (notable in the first nine Fragments) – something that distinguishes humans from animals – finally fails him.¹⁹ After his homecoming, instead of getting better, he starts filling in reams of paper with the writing that he believes to be his immortal masterpiece, while in fact it consists merely of "hideous lines, broken, crooked, devoid of any sense" (Andreief 1905, 71).²⁰

Curiously, the ultimate disintegration of the first narrator's mind happens at neither the frontline nor the hospital ward²¹ but at his family house, where he

¹⁹ He was a journalist in peace time, so the loss of his writing skills is tantamount to a loss of professional identity and lucrative income.

²⁰ As Rimmon-Kenan (2006, 245) notes about a different illness narrative, "a disintegrating body may threaten the very possibility of narration".

²¹ Although an obvious space of illness, hospital wards are described in *Krasnyi smekh* rather unmemorably, in broad and generic terms (cf. "the groans and ravings of the wounded", "the groaning mutilated shadows"; Andreief 1905, 18, 49). This may be

always longed to return while he was in the war zone (see, for instance, Andreief 1905, 3, 9-11, 46). The quiet and peaceful atmosphere and the loving care of family members and servants at his permanent place of abode produce an opposite effect from what is anticipated, i.e. a complete breakdown rather than a recovery. This is because in *Krasnyi smekh* the hostile external space consistently “strives to transgress the boundary <that divides it from> the private space, thus invading this privacy and destroying its safety” (Pykhtina 2012, 69). Both the first and the second narrator discover, much to their chagrin, that there is nowhere to hide from the havoc that the war-related insanity wreaks.

When the second narrator steps in to continue with the storytelling, his function as a participant observer involves making a record of how his own mental health is gradually affected by the ever worsening situation in the country as a whole, both near and far from the battlespace (cf. “I see the <maddening> infection catching me, and half of my thoughts belong to me no longer”; Andreief 1905, 80). Thus, the second part of *Krasnyi smekh* is less about the immediacy and sensuality of combat experience (mostly accounted for in the first part) and more about the attempt to reflect upon this experience and its persistent influence not only on the troops but also on the civilians who have never taken part in or witnessed military action first hand.

Why did Andreev need to alter the narrator in the middle of the story? According to White (2014, 148), “the illness narrative of the two brothers allows Andreev to describe <...> the experience of mental illness at the moment of mania <(through the first narrator)>, as well as the fears and rationalizations of an individual at the onset of psychosis <(through the second narrator)>”. In this way, the narrative is structurally problematic; yet as an illness narrative it is multifaceted and complex in the best sense of these words. Rather than choosing to give only one side of illness (symptom or meaning), Andreev explicates different facets of the same experience.

While fully agreeing with this interpretation, we would like, in addition, to draw attention to the fact that the second brother/narrator appears to be suffering from the so-called persistent complex bereavement disorder, or PCBD, defined as an “unusually disabling or prolonged response to bereavement” (Fleming 2017), with the condition’s symptoms lasting for at least six months. Such symptoms include (but are not limited to) an intense and persistent yearning for, and frequent preoccupation with, the deceased; detachment and/or isolation; depression; impairment in social, occupational or other areas of life; anger or

because of Andreev’s preference for contrasting images in this story, such as that of Red Laugh (utilizing the tension between wound-inflicted pain and a joyous reaction to it) or a dream about murderous children in Fragment XV. Apparently, hospital wards could not provide Andreev with enough contrast for either the war or the peace scenes. Another plausible explanation is that Andreev may have “never been in a combat hospital” (White 2014, 146).

bitterness about the death; hearing and/or seeing the deceased; and identity confusion.

The constant preoccupation of the second narrator with the death of the first is obvious. As the latter says of the former, “his death weighs upon me like a stone, oppressing my brain” (Andreief 1905, 72). It is hard to ascertain if the second brother’s grieving lasts longer than six months (because it is unclear how much time passes between each of the narrative fragments), and if it seriously impairs his occupation (he does not ever mention being employed in any capacity, for example – but the family is rich, so maybe he does not need to work for money). Yet he is certainly isolated, of his own volition, not following the rest of the family to the countryside after his brother’s burial but staying in the family town house alone (the servants have been dismissed) and feeling utterly miserable: “I am alone in the house. <...> And <...> I know that I shall never leave the house” (ibid., 72).

When in the house, the younger brother regularly sees, hears and speaks to the ghost of his older brother (see Fragments XII, XV-XVI, as well as the Last Fragment). He blames his brother’s death on a faceless and nameless human mass that he imagines to have wild beasts’ snouts (i.e. part-people, part-beasts): “<My brother> was noble-hearted and gentle and wished no one evil. <...> What did you kill <him> for?” (Andreief 1905, 105). As a kind of revenge, the second narrator imagines provoking a murderous panic among theatre attendees, under the false pretext that the theatre building has caught fire. To explain his motives to the fire scare survivors, the second narrator visualizes repeating to them twice (in case they did not get it the first time around): “It has all happened because you killed my brother” (ibid., 85). Yet no one present at the actual theatrical performance could be held accountable for the first narrator’s death. Fantasizing about panic in the theatre is clearly an instance of misdirected anger over the death of a close relative.

Finally, we are also dealing with a case of identity confusion here. After the older brother returns home from the front, the younger one relates to him better than any other member of the family does (see White 2014, 143), including the older brother’s wife. In the story, this is reflected in the frequently overlooked but highly significant detail: both parts of *Krasnyi smekh* are actually written by the second narrator, who assumes the identity of the first narrator in the nine initial fragments. This is revealed in the second narrator’s own admission: “All that I have written down concerning the war is founded upon the words of my dead brother; <...> a few separate episodes were burnt into his brain so deeply and indelibly that I could cite the very words that he used in telling me them” (Andreief 1905, 72). Andreev’s letter to Maksim Gor’kii of November 1904 confirms: “The *entire* story has been written by the second brother” (quoted in Shishkina 2017, 591).

The second narrator is predisposed to PCBD because he does not have a family of his own to worry about (he is presumably still too young to start a family, anyway) and was a caregiver to the deceased (for example, he helps his invalid brother to take a bath in Fragment IX). Already in this Fragment, when the reader first meets him, the younger brother is mentally unhinged by the media reports about the unremitting spread of violence. He confesses to his older brother: "I am very much afraid of going mad. <...> I am beginning to lose all understanding of what is permissible and what is not. <...> Strange ideas entered my head – to take a hatchet, for instance, and go and kill everybody – mother, sister, the servants, our dog" (Andreief 1905, 57-58). After the older brother dies, another complication occurs: the second narrator's grief is a so-called sibling's grief, which is a disenfranchised form of grief, i.e. insufficiently recognized by society and therefore lacking understanding and support from others (for details, see White 2006a). Even if the second narrator was not self-isolating, chances are that he would have had to cope with the loss of his brother very much on his own in any case, which could only further destabilise his already precarious mental state.

Curiously, PCBD is listed in the fifth (latest) version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), published in 2013, as an area for further study, i.e. a phenomenon that requires additional investigation before it is confirmed as a new, distinctive form of mental disorder. Siblings' grief is also a category of grief that has started attracting specialised medical attention only fairly recently. *Krasnyi smekh* demonstrates how well-attuned and forward-thinking Andreev was in detecting and picturing something that even professional psychiatrists of today are unsure about or can be oblivious to. Why, however, did Andreev chose a masculine and not a feminine figure for an empathic second narrator, even though women mourners seem to be a more common sight in literature and sculpture?

The bereaved women do make an appearance in *Krasnyi smekh* – for example, the first narrator's distressed mother, sister, wife and nanny in Fragment VIII; a dying soldier's mother who cannot understand why her son should sacrifice his life for his Fatherland (Fragment IV); and a younger sister of another insane officer from Fragment XVI (she is off to the front, presumably as a volunteer nurse, because, she explains, "they need help <there>, the same as <...> my brother"; Andreief 1905, 98). Yet Andreev must have needed to introduce an imaginary brother, central to the story, for autobiographical reasons, namely to account for his own hyper-empathy (an enhanced aptitude to intuit other people's thoughts and emotions)²² that most probably enabled him to come up with the story in the first place.

²² For more on hyper-empathy, see Orloff 2017.

In *Krasnyi smekh*, the second narrator describes one of his hyper-empathic moments as follows:

My thought embraced the whole world. I saw with the eyes of all mankind, and listened with its ears; I died with the killed, sorrowed and wept with all that were wounded and left behind, and, when blood flowed out of anybody's body, I felt the pain of the wound and suffered. Even all that had not happened and was far away, I saw as clearly as if it had happened and was close by. (Andreief 1905, 87-88)

It may well be that this is Andreev speaking through his character to explain the creative processes behind *Krasnyi smekh*. It is known that Andreev did not take part in the Russo-Japanese war in any capacity, and formed a judgement about it mostly from testimonies in the media (for their summary, see Soboleva 2001; and Shishkina 2017, 595-601). This was mentioned by several critics in their appreciations of *Krasnyi smekh*. For example, Vladimir Botsianovskii (1905) noted that Andreev belongs to a category of "humans who treat the far-away bloodshed and other people's torments as if these were their own". A number of critics linked Andreev's extraordinary receptiveness and compassion to his nervous disposition. Thus, Fotii Beliaevskii (1905) said: "Andreev showed war experience through a sharpened conscience of a <...> nervous, responsive and sensitive person". For his part, Veresaev (1946, 447) called *Krasnyi smekh* "a work by a great neurasthenic artist, painfully and passionately reliving the war via newspaper reports".²³

While Veresaev (ibid.) believed that *Krasnyi smekh* did not take into consideration some people's ability to get used to anything and thus protect themselves from a nervous breakdown, Mumortsev (1910, 15) insisted that, even though the war in *Krasnyi smekh* may not be depicted correctly, "the world as experienced by the <...> mentally ill is".²⁴ Thus Andreev's peculiar combination of neurasthenia, hyper-empathy and belief in degeneration as humanity's future afforded him a deep insight into the psychotic state of those suffering from the phenome-

²³ According to contemporary medical observations (Ozeretskovskii 1905, 368, 370-72, 570; Shaikevich 1907, 455, 462, 629-32), the Russo-Japanese war gave disproportionate rise precisely to the neurasthenic psychosis, in preference to most other forms of psychosis, especially among the frontline Russian troops (military doctors and paramedics were also affected).

²⁴ The psychiatrist Martyn Shaikevich (1910, 111) thought it possible that in *Krasnyi smekh* Andreev "did not pay attention to the force of habit <...> deliberately, because it definitely weakens the sense of horror". Shaikevich was a proponent of the so-called psychopathological method of literary analysis, which advocated "studying the sickly sides of the author's and the characters' personalities to better understand the nature of the works of art and the psychology of creative processes" (ibid., 101). It is Shaikevich's method that we have broadly adopted in this article.

na acknowledged only later as shell shock and mass hysteria. His idiosyncratic interpretation of real-life and imaginary locations and circumstances, reflected in the damaged psyche of a war invalid and his carer and relative, a PCBD sufferer (a mental disorder unknown to doctors at the time), resulted in a powerful description of an obsessively jubilant cycle of destruction that takes over the human mind, reducing humans to beasts. Andreev's masterful generalization of a particular military conflict and its psychiatric consequences – presented as a heterotopia (Foucault 1984) – has turned *Krasnyi smekh* into a work of universal significance and secured its lasting relevance.²⁵

(UiT The Arctic University of Norway)

L i t e r a t u r e

- Andreief, Leonidas. 1905. *The Red Laugh: Fragments of a Discovered Manuscript*, Transl. by Alexandra Lindén, London: T. Fisher Unwin.
- Anon. 1915. "The Plays of Andreyef", *The Spectator*, 15 May.
- Arabazhin, K. I. 1910. *Leonid Andreev: Itogi tvorchestva*. <The Results of Leonid Andreev's Creative Activity> St Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol'za.
- Beliavskii, F. N. 1905. "Koshmar" <A Nightmare>, *Slovo*, 29 January.
- Botsianovskii V. F. 1905. "Krasnyi smekh" <The Red Laugh>, *Rus'*, 26 January.
- Burenin, V. P. 1905. "Kriticheskie ocherki" <Critical Essays>, *Novoe vremia*, 4 February.
- Charon, Rita. 2008. *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Connaughton, Richard. 2004. *Rising Sun and Tumbling Bear: Russia's War with Japan*, London: Cassell.
- d'Auvergne, Jean <Robert Bruce Lockhart> 1914. "Russian Literature since Chekhov", *The Russian Review* (Liverpool), May, pp. 148-57.
- Fleming, Kevin. 2017. "Persistent Complex Bereavement Disorder DSM-5", *Theravive.com*, <https://www.theravive.com/therapedia/persistent-complex-bereavement-disorder-dsm--5> (accessed 11 April 2020).

²⁵ Cf.: In *Krasnyi smekh*, Andreev has "created enormously generalised images of tremendous force. In them, the excruciatingly mad, war-related sufferings of individuals, peoples and humanity are concentrated" (Iezuitova 2010, 164). We would like to express our gratitude to Ekaterina Rogatchevskaia (London), Richard D. Davies (Leeds), Mikhail Koz'menko (Moscow), Viktor Kel'ner and Iurii Shtengel' (St Petersburg) for sharing with us a number of vital sources which would otherwise have remained inaccessible.

- Foucault, Michel. 1984. "Des Espace Autres", *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5: pp. 46–49.
- Frank, Arthur W. 1995. *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness and Ethics*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Hellman, Ben. 2015. "Five Russian Plans for Peace: From Leo Tolstoy to Alexander Skriabin". in: *Pax*, ed. by Ritva Hartama-Heinonen and Pirjo Kukkonen, Helsinki: Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian Studies, University of Helsinki, pp. 49-59.
- Iezuitova, L. A. 2010. *Leonid Andreev i literatura Serebrianogo veka: Izbrannye trudy*. SPb: Petropolis.
- Jacob, Frank. 2017. *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the Twentieth Century*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- Jurecic Ann. 2012. *Illness as Narrative*, Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Kaun, Alexander S. 1924. *Leonid Andreyev: A Critical Study*, New York: B W Huebsch.
- Kleinman, Arthur. 1988. *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing and the Human Condition*, New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Koz'menko, Mikhail. 2010. "Artur Shopengauer v rannikh dnevnikh i pozdneishikh proizvedeniiakh Leonida Andreeva: K probleme korreliatsii filosofskoi i khudozhestvennoi kartin mirozdaniia" <Arthur Schopenhauer in Leonid Andreev's Early Diaries and Later Fiction: On the Correlation between the Philosophical and Artistic Visions of the World>, *Izvestiia RAN: Seriiia literatury i iazyka* 6, pp. 21-30.
- Lindén, Simeon. 1906. "Leonidas Andreief", *The Independent Review*, February: pp. 215–27.
- Lombroso, Cesare. 1891. *The Man of Genius*, London: Walter Scott.
- Mumortsev, A. N. 1910. *Psikhopaticheskie cherty v geroiakh Leonida Andreeva* <Psychopathic Features in Leonid Andreev's Characters>, St Petersburg: s. l.
- Necrometrics, "Russo-Japanese War (1904-05): 130,000", <https://necrometrics.com/20c100k.htm#RJW> (accessed on 4 July 2020).
- Nordau, Max. 1895. *Paradoxes*, Chicago: Laird & Lee.
- Nordau, Max. 1898. *Degeneration*, London: William Heinemann.
- Orloff, Judith. 2017. *The Empath's Survival Guide: Life Strategies for Sensitive People*, Boulder, Co.: Sounds True.
- Ozeretskivskii, A. I. 1905. "O dushevnykh zabolevaniiah v sviazi s russko-iaponskoi voinoi za pervyi god eia" <On the Mental Disorders in Connection with the Russo-Japanese War in Its First Year >, *Voенно-meditsinskii zhurnal* 10, pp. 361-373 (Part I); 11, pp. 568-582 (Part II).
- Persky, Serge. 1914. *Contemporary Russian Novelists* / Transl. from the French by Frederick Eisemann, London: Frank Palmer.

- Pykhtina Iu. G. 2012. "Struktura khudozhestvennogo prostranstva v povesti L. Andreeva «Krasnyi smekh»" <The Structure of Imaginary Space in L. Andreev's Story *The Red Laugh*>, *Vestnik Orenburgskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 4 (140), pp. 68-73.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. 2006. "What Can Narrative Theory Learn from Illness Narratives?", *Literature and Medicine*, 25 (2), pp. 241-254.
- Shaikevich, M. O. 1907. "K voprosu o dushevnykh zabolevaniiah v voiske v sviazi s rusko-iaponskoi voinoi" <On the Mental Disorders among the Military in Connection with the Russo-Japanese War>, *Voенно-meditsinskii zhurnal*, vol. CCXIX, no. 6, pp. 276-292 (Part I); no. 7, pp. 445-467 (Part II); vol. CCXX, no. 8, pp. 629-641 (Part III); no. 9, pp. 81-94 (Part IV).
- Shaikevich, M. O. 1910. *Psikhopatologiia i literatura* <Psychopathology and Fiction>, St Petersburg: Ts. Kraiz.
- Shishkina, L. I. 2017. "Krasnyi smekh" <The Red Laugh> in Andreev, L. N. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v 23 tomakh*, Moscow: Nauka, vol. 4, pp. 583-629.
- Skorokhod, Natal'ia. 2013. *Leonid Andreev*, Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia.
- Soboleva, N. I. 2001. "Leonid Andreev «Krasnyi smekh»: Real'nost' i vymysel" <Leonid Andreev's *Red Laugh*: Reality and Fiction>, *Iubileinaia mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia po gumanitarnym naukam, posviashchennaia 70-letiiu Orlovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta: Materialy, vyp. II, L. N. Andreev i B. K. Zaitsev*, ed. by E. A. Mikheicheva. Orel: Orlovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, pp. 23-26.
- Veresaev, Vikentii. 1946. *Vospominaniia* (Memoirs), Moscow-Leningrad: OGIZ, 3rd edition.
- White, P. Gill. 2006a. *Sibling Grief: Healing after the Death of a Sister or Brother*, New York: iUniverse Star.
- White, Frederick H. 2006b. *Memoirs and Madness: Leonid Andreev Through the Prism of the Literary Portrait*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- White, Frederick H. 2014. *Degeneration, Decadence and Disease in the Russian Fin de Siècle: Neurasthenia in the Life and Work of Leonid Andreev*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Woodward, James B. 1969. *Leonid Andreyev: A Study*, Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press.

Abstract

Andreyev's story *Krasnyi smekh* (The Red Laugh, 1905) describes mass madness as a combat-related contagious epidemic engulfing an unnamed country (at war with another unnamed country). It thus predicts the Great War and the imminent East/Central European revolutions. Moreover, the story retained its significance up until the late Soviet period and can also be read as a proto-zombie

apocalypse scenario, still resonant today in the context of a triumphant onslaught of illiberal populism. How to explain such an extraordinary clairvoyance and long-lasting relevance? A spaces-of-illness approach may give us a clue.

Four such spaces are identifiable in *Krasnyi smekh*, two objective and two subjective. The objective ones consist of, first, the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05 as an inspiration for the story's unspecified military conflict; and second, the spreading of mass madness from the frontline to behind the lines and further, to areas thousands of miles away from the actual fighting. The subjective ones include, first, an inverted perception of reality from a madman's point of view (exemplified by an insane military doctor doing a handstand); and second, Andreyev's diagnosis as a neurasthenic with a hospitalization history, which undoubtedly "played a part in those of his stories which give us a presentment of the psychology of certain of his mentally unbalanced characters" (Lindén 1906).

Andreyev did not personally take part in the war, but his nervous disposition, tentatively defined as a combination of neurasthenia and hyper-empathy syndrome (under the influence of degeneration theory, see White 2014), afforded him a deep insight into the psychotic state of those suffering from phenomena acknowledged only later as shell shock and mass hysteria. *Krasnyi smekh's* medical background is revealed and interpreted through the professional psychiatric publications by both Andreyev's and our contemporaries. Andreyev's masterful generalization of a particular military conflict and its psychiatric consequences – presented as a heterotopia (Foucault 1984), i.e. simultaneously a real place and a placeless place – has secured *Krasnyi smekh's* continuing importance.

Keywords

Leonid Andreev, illness narrative, spaces of illness, neurasthenia, mass hysteria, progressive palsy, persistent complex bereavement disorder, madness in fiction, Russian literature, Russo-Japanese war