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FAZIL' ISKANDER: AN ANALYSIS OF HIS PROSE

By

Kathleen Ann Haase

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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1986

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ABSTRACT

FAZIL' ISKANDER: AN ANALYSIS OF HIS PROSE

By

Kathleen Ann Haase

Iskander's prose, dating from 1962 through 1985, is analyzed to reveal the prominent themes, characters, and poetic devices. Chapter One examines the major themes (Iskander's childhood, Abkhazia, love, writing, truth in art, humor, and nature); Chapter Two analyzes Iskander's main characters (Iskander as a boy, Čik, Iskander as an adult, his mother, father, sister, brother, grandfather, Uncle Kolja, grandmother, aunt, the Rich Tailor, Alixan, Kolčerukij, Uncle Kjazym, and Sandro); Chapter Three examines Iskander's poetics (language, compositional structure, imagery--personification, oxymoron, ostranenie, allusions, motifs--and satire); and Chapter Four surveys the critical reception of Iskander's prose.

Two dominent themes prevail in Iskander's prose--his childhood and his native Abkhazia. The autobiographical stories show the inner world of a preadolescent boy who is just coming to terms with the world around him. As Iskander describes the history and customs of Abkhazia, he also reveals his concern that this way of life is disappearing. The theme of Abkhazia is linked with a love of nature.

Iskander's characters reappear in many of his works, forming a network of over two dozen characters, whose lives continually criss cross (peasants, bazaar merchants, tailors, and palm-readers). All belong to Abkhazia and through their lives Iskander produces his mosaic picture of Abkhazia.

Iskander's strengths lie in the variety of his language, control of narrative voice, characterization, imagery (simile, metaphor, symbol, allusions and personification). His shorter works are tightly structured, using foreshadowing to strengthen the composition and thematic cohesiveness. He frequently draws on other works of literature, folklore, and Bible, and Greco-Roman history and mythology for titles and imagery. Satirical and humorous devices occupy a prominent place in Iskander's poetics. His satire, notably in the use of hyperbole, grotesque, personification, names, digressions, and the blend of lyricism and satire, is closely linked to Gogol'.

Iskander's prose has been received exceptionally well, in the Soviet Union and in America. The critics see Iskander experimenting in new directions, moving away from an autobiographical to third-person narration.

In memory of

my mother

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Introduction

Fazil′ Abdulovič Iskander is a Soviet writer of Abkhazian origin. Born in Abkhazia on March 6, 1929, Iskander grew up in Sukhumi, a city on the Black Sea in the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic in Soviet Georgia. By contrast, most of Iskander′s adult life has been spent in Moscow.

After graduating from High School No. 3 in Sukhumi in 1948, Iskander went to Moscow, where he enrolled in the State Library Institute. In 1951 he transferred to Gor′kij Literary Institute, graduating in 1954. Since graduating, he has worked as a newspaper editor in Krusky and in Bryansk. From 1954 to 1955 Iskander worked in the literary section of Brjanskij Komsomolec. Then from 1955 to 1956 he worked at Kurskaja pravda. Following this Iskander returned to Abkhazia where he worked as an editor for the Abkhazian State Publishing House in Sukhumi. In 1962 Iskander moved back to Moscow, where he currently lives. Iskander′s literary output includes works that establish him as a poet, prose fiction writer, translator, and critic. One of his short stories, Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok, was made into a film in 1970 by G. S. Gabaj.

Iskander began his literary career as a poet, with his first poems appearing in 1953. Poema o bditel′nosti was

published on March 21, 1953 in Dagestanskaja pravda; Pervyj arbuz was included in the eigth issue of the almanach Molodaja gvardija. His first prose work, Pervoe delo, appeared in 1956, to be followed by the short stories, Petux and Rasskaz o more, that appeared six years later. And by 1986, Iskander has written 57 short stories, seven tales, and one novel.

With regularity, Iskander's works have appeared in Novyj mir, Nedel'ja, Junost', Družba narodov, Trud, Literaturnaja gazeta, and Sel'skaja molodež', to name but a few of the most frequent publishers of Iskander's works. Most of these works have been republished in his eight prose collections. A number of Iskander's works have been translated into many languages, including English, such as his povest' Sozvezdie kozlotura and his novel Sandro iz Čegema.

Iskander's works are widely read in the Soviet Union. Klaus Mehnert ranks Iskander among the most popular Russian authors, although he places Iskander among the second group of twenty-four. His popularity seems undiminished by his participation in Metropol'. Since Iskander was both an editor and contributor to the collection, he was punished by the Soviet government--his works were not published for several years. However, the government seems to have relented for several new books have been published in the Soviet Union recently. In 1983

Zaščita Čika, a collection of stories including one--Vozmezdie--which only appeared before in Metropol', was published by Sovetskij pisatel'. Then in 1985 Raduga Publishers in Moscow published a translation of most of these works in Chik and his Friends. The best sign of official forgiveness can be seen in the publication of a biographical bibliography on Iskander in 1982--Fazil' Iskander: Biobibliografičeskij ukazatel'. The introductory article by the compilor Z. B. Mixajlova and a seventeen page article by B. Sarnov praise Iskander as an author of books that are wise and happy, at times sad and thoughtful, yet are always good. This is followed by seven pages of quotes from critical essays acclaiming Iskander's poetry and prose. With the path to publication open once again, we can look forward to further new works by Fazil' Iskander.

Iskander's literary predecessors include Turgenev, Tolstoj, Čexov, Bunin, Gogol', Zoščenko, and Gor'kij. The lyricism of Turgenev, Čexov, and Bunin has a direct descendent in Iskander. Nature is another link between these authors. The young narrator of Iskander's works reminds the reader of the boy narrator in the works of Tolstoj and Gor'kij.

Iskander's roots can also be found in Russian satire, that of Gogol' and Zoščenko in particular. Like Gogol', Iskander combines both lyricism and satire. Zoščenko's

depiction of the disparities in everyday life, his display of comic incongruities and situations in ordinary people's lives--all this is found in Iskander's satire.

Chapter One

This dissertation concentrates solely on the prose of Iskander. The first chapter surveys Iskander's prose focusing on major themes in his works. Although much of Iskander's work is autobiographical, my dissertation does not study Iskander's prose from a biographical point of view to identify a fiction or reality reflected in his works. Abkhazian life and traditions are the focus of another major theme that will not be discussed from the historical approach simply to discover Abkhazian traditions and history. Instead, it focuses on why Iskander has chosen these themes. I discuss what Iskander is examining in his childhood, what aspects of interpersonal relationships are portrayed, and what Iskander is saying about Abkhazian life. I also consider several additional themes which encompass Iskander's adult life, honesty, love, love of nature, and Iskander's views on humor and literature.

Chapter Two

Iskander's works are structured around the experiences or relationships of one person or a small group of people. Therefore, an analysis of several main figures comprises Chapter Two. Characterization is one of the strengths of

Iskander's prose. He is able to create convincing portrayals in his stories. His most successful works describe characters and events taken from real life. Some of his characters emerge again and again in later works, reinforcing what the reader already knows and building on that to reveal additional aspects of a character's personality. A network of interwoven strands is formed whereby the characters become old friends of the reader when relatives, neighbors, and friends are reintroduced.

A large number of Iskander's works are autobiographical. The narrator here is an adult recalling his own childhood. Several other stories and tales are by a narrator who tells about a young boy named Čik, whose attitude and background closely identify him with Iskander as a child. Both of these characters are analyzed. The other characters to be studied are Iskander as an adult, Kolčerukij, the Rich Tailor, Sandro of Čegem, Kjazym, Iskander's grandfather, Uncle Kolja--his "crazy uncle," Iskander's favorite aunt, Alixan, and the Palmist.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three is devoted to an analysis of Iskander's poetics. It will center on the following poetic devices identified as central to Iskander's prose: language, structure (narration, digression, foreshadowing, characterization), imagery (simile, metaphor, symbol), personification, oxymoron, ostranenie, allusions, motifs,

and satire. This is a general analysis of all of Iskander's prose not of one particular work. The intent is to reveal and discuss the prevalent characteristics of Iskander's prose. Therefore, the analaysis of a single work is not exhaustive. At the same time, a statistical analysis of the poetic devices found in his prose is beyond the scope of this work.

Language, one most important component of Iskander's poetics, is carefuly chosen to indicate internal changes, to show feelings and moods. Descriptions of nature play an important role in setting the mood. Iskander uses many local Abkhazian or Turkic words to enhance the reader's feel for Abkhazia and its culture. Here he achieves a delicate balance. There are not enough foreign words to impede understanding of the story, but enough to give the reader the flavor of life in Abkhazia. Slang and colorful idioms also appear in conversation, helping to characterize the speaker. Iskander also includes the jargon of the newspaper world, particularly in Sozvezdie Kozlotura and in several short stories. This special language helps to set the mood and denote the author's feelings about the "Red Subtropics" and campaigns. This type of language is then contrasted with the author's lyrical description of nature.

This chapter also studies Iskander's main structural devices. Iskander's shorter works are tightly structured.

Each one has a sense of completeness. The end of the work brings together the loose ends of the story, closing the tale without a sense of abruptness.

Narration is a major structural device used by Iskander. Many stories are first-person narrations by one of the main characters. Other works are told by a narrator who knew the person being described. Frequently, works told in the first-person are built around an episode in the life of a child. The climax often comes in a realization about himself or another main character in the story. Iskander does not limit himself to first person narration alone. He also uses omniscient, third person narration, where he strictly controls the point of view.

Other devices analyzed include digressions, foreshadowing, and characterization. Digressions have multiple purposes. They add an informal chatty tone to a work, provide information and humor, relieve tension and suspense, develop the main theme, and contrast ideas. Iskander uses foreshadowing in a number of works to strengthen the cohesiveness of each piece.

This chapter likewise deals with Iskander's method of characterization. In addition to a description of his outer appearance, each person is shown through his gestures, conversations, and interaction with others. Iskander is skilled at using a key feature or mannerism to capture the essence of a particular character. Such is

the case with Kolčerukij and the Rich Tailor. Each character becomes an individual yet has universal foibles. Kolčerukij, for example, is the loudmouth, intent on one-up-manship, that everyone has met at one time or another. In each case, I discuss the initial description of a character. Contrasted with his usual method, is the charaterization of the editor, Avtandil Avtandilovič, in Sozvezdie Kozlotura. Here Iskander turns to caricature in keeping with the poetic devices of this satiric work.

Iskander's works are filled with a unique, vivid imagery. It is here in particular that one can see the poet behind the prose writer. Metaphor and simile are used extensively throughout Iskander's prose. Following an analysis of these elements, there is a discussion of his use of oxymoron, ostranenie, personification, and folkloric, Biblical, and Greco-Roman motifs.

Additional focus falls on Iskander's satire, which plays an important part in his prose. Elements of satire are evident in most of his works, notably in many of his short stories, Sozvezdie Kozlotura, and Sandro iz Čegema. In addition to using the poetic devices mentioned above to convey his satiric message, Iskander employs a number of additional devices. Grotesque, hyperbole, allegory, and dreams, among others, are among those devices analyzed.

Chapter Four

This chapter examines the reception of Iskander in literary criticism. It begins with Iskander's own views on literature, particularly the ideas expressed in his articles "Pružina jumora," "Ob očage i dome," "Poézija dramy," "Idei i priemy," and "O novatorstve, banal'nyx istinax i citatax."

A survey of the major interpretations of Iskander's prose concerning Iskander's themes, poetics, humor and satire is discussed. This is followed by a more detailed analysis of five individual works: Den' i noč' Čika, Remzik, Sozvezdie kozlotura, Morskoj skorpion, and Sandro iz Čegema. The survey includes Soviet and Western criticism. Soviet reviews include criticisms by S. Rassadin, V. Solov'ev, S. Sivokon', V. Azanov, and B. Sarnov, among others. The analysis of criticism published outside the Soviet Union examines C. Packard's thesis and dissertation and articles by V. Babenko, H. Burlingame, and by many other Iskander scholars.

Conclusion

Iskander is an accomplished prose writer who has already found a place among the leading writers in the Soviet Union. However, there is no detailed thorough analysis of Iskander's prose to date. Some of his individual prose works have been studied critically, but many not at all. This dissertation is a comprehensive

analysis of the themes, characters, and poetics in all of his prose.

This study will reveal that Iskander's prose frequently displays humorous, satirical asides, which remind one of Gogol''s satiric devices--a blending of lyricism and satire. Yet Iskander's works achieve a much more balanced union than those of Gogol'. In Iskander a less obtrusive use of grotesque prevails. Iskander, furthermore, exhibits a genuine sympathy for his characters. A number of comparisons with the works of Zoscenko can be drawn as well, Iskander's works are much lighter and are less topical than Zoscenko's.

Much of Iskander's work is autobiographical, depicting the colorful people and customs of Abkhazia. Iskander values these traditions and is concerned over their loss in contemporary society.

The focus of Iskander's works is people. His stories center around an event in the life of Iskander himself or one of his relatives, neighbors, or friends. Iskander is skilled at creating convincing portrayals of these people.

Iskander's works are well-written and tightly structured. Language is carefuly chosen, achieving a delicate balance between lyrical digressions, local Abkhazian and Turkic words, newspaper jargon, slang, and idioms. Iskander's satire is gentle, yet sharp and well-directed when necessary.

Chapter One

Themes

Iskander is a highly autobiographical writer. He focuses on his family and neighbors and on life in his native Abkhazia. Iskander is keenly aware of the political, social, and cultural problems of this world. As he recreates this world in his prose, his sympathies and convictions are clearly revealed. A detailed analysis of Iskander's prose uncovers a number of readily discernable major themes.

Iskander's childhood is important to him and forms a major theme which runs through half of his prose. Depicting his life at a time when he is just entering adolescence, he charts his growth and progress toward emotional maturity, developing a subtheme from his childhood. As he explores his childhood world, Iskander describes his family life, analyzing his relationships with various members of his family. Childhood friendships are also scrutinized in their many aspects--including loyalty, honesty, compassion, competitiveness, rivalry, and bullying. Another side of this children's world examined by Iskander falls under the general category of school. Here Iskander looks at grades, homework, teachers, and medal competitions.

Some of these same themes recur in the works centering on Iskander's adult life. Friendship and honesty are picked up again and discussed from the adult point of view. When he describes his adult years, Iskander also turns to the theme of love. This search for love encompasses both the clumsiness and beauty of young love as well as the pain of love lost.

As Iskander chats with his reader, many of his comments concern writing and his evaluation of his own writing, forming another major theme of his prose. When discussing writing Iskander underscores the importance of humor--an additional theme recurring in his works.

The majority of Iskander's prose centers on life in Abkhazia. Even those works that are set in Moscow or elsewhere in the Soviet Union inevitably touch upon life in Abkhazia in some fashion. The main characters return home or remember some aspect of life there. Indeed there are few people from Moscow in the Iskander's prose. Most characters, even if living in Moscow, are originally from Abkhazia. Other people, including Iskander himself, are judged by the standards of Abkhazian customs and rules of hospitality. Thus when these works are viewed as a whole, it is evident that Iskander reveals much of the history and customs of Abkhazia through the lives of his characters. Works concerning this major theme refer as far back as tsarist times before the turn of the century

and chronical major historical events. Included among the many facets of life in Abkhazia, one will find engagements, bride abductions, marriages, the ritual of proving one's manhood, family life on the farm, hospitality, death, and funerals.

Soviet rule over Abkhazia has brought with it many changes and problems. Among these, Iskander analyzes the dictatorships of Lenin, Stalin, and Khrushchev, collectivization, the purges, the cult of the personality, and the resettlement of ethnic groups. Contemporary problems include bribery, the black market, crime, hooliganism, alcoholism, and prostitution. Iskander is a deeply national writer who is concerned about all the changes occurring in Abkhazia. In his prose, he repeatedly returns to this theme. With the traditional way of life disappearing, Iskander questions whether or not anything of comparable worth will replace this loss of traditional values and customs.

Closely related to Iskander's love of Abkhazia is his love of nature, particularly the forest and the sea. This theme includes an emphasis on the necessity to protect the beauty of nature from destruction by the poacher and careless tourist.

A prevalent theme running through one half Iskander's prose is that of his childhood, set in Abkhazia during the late 1930s and 1940s. All these stories are first person

narrations with Iskander as the unnamed narrator. Iskander combs through his past to share valuable and interesting lessons.

> Хотя в наших морях не бывает приливов и отливов, земля детства -- это мокрый загадочный берег после отлива, на котором можно найти самые неожиданные вещи.[1]

The narrator Iskander describes himself as he enters adolescence. His growth and development toward maturity is a theme which comes to the foreground as the boy tries to deal with life's challenges. While grappling with such problems, Iskander stresses the necessity to maintain faith in humanity at all times.

> Может быть, самая трогательная и самая глубокая черта детства -- бессознательная вера в необходимость здравого смысла. Следовательно, раз в чем-то нет здравого смысла, надо искать, что исказило его или куда он затерялся. Детство верит, что мир разумен, а все неразумное -- это помехи, которые можно устранить, стоит повернуть нужный рычаг. Может быть, дело в том, что в детстве мы еще слышим шум материнской крови, проносившейся сквозь нас и вскормившей нас. Мир руками наших матерей делал нам добро и только добро, и разве не естественно, что доверие к его разумности у нас первично. А как же иначе?
>
> Я думаю, что настоящие люди -- это те, что с годами не утрачивают детской веры в разумность мира, ибо эта вера поддерживает истинную страсть в борьбе с безумием жестокости и глупости.[2]

Focusing on people, Iskander explores a particular aspect of interpersonal relationships in his childhood stories, studying how people interact with one another. Frequently the story shows how members of the family get

along together. The special relationship between a grandfather and his grandson is an important one which Iskander analyzes. His respect and love show through the portrait he creates. His grandfather's strong personality has an effect on the rest of the family as well. As a boy, he waited for his grandfather to fail at something or make some small mistake. Iskander sensed that others in the family also felt the same way for then his grandfather could not command as much respect and would not be able to interfere in their lives.

The relationship between himself as a boy and his uncle Kolja, who was insane, is another complex bond disclosed by Iskander. This is broadened to include his uncle's sister and mother who all lived above Iskander. Although Iskander and his brother could not resist temptation and teased Uncle Kolja unmercifully, Iskander did not like it when others criticized Kolja or laughed at Kolja's love of Aunt Faina. His aunt and grandmother loved and protected Kolja. Iskander helped out by taking his uncle to fish or to get lemonade, his two favorite pastimes.

Iskander examines the ties between himself and his strong-willed, domineering aunt who lived upstairs. Iskander spent much time at her place. She must have taken care of him while his mother worked at the hospital. Iskander was her favorite nephew and his aunt took him

under her wing, dragging him to movies nightly over his mother's protests. His aunt also took great pride in Iskander's performance in school, considering him an "otličnik." In Dolgi i strasti and a number of other stories, Iskander tells how he expended much energy to prevent his aunt from discovering that everything was not up to the level of her expectations.

Relationships with other children are also described in some detail, exposing the many facets of childhood friendships. The special relationship with an idol is one such aspect to come under scrutiny. In Moj Kumir Iskander studies why he idolized Jura Stavrokidi, as well as how and why the relationship disintegrated. Jura was bigger, stronger, and more athletic than anyone in Iskander's class and Iskander followed in his footsteps. Yet when Iskander would not unquestionly support Jura by lieing, it was the end of their friendship. This study of the problems of friendship is carried over into Iskander's adult years. Trust is a main ingredient of friendship; if it is not there, the friendship will die. In Letnim dnem, a German describes his good friend, one to whom during Hitler's time he could tell everything. Yet a chill came between them when one momentarily suspected the other of being a Gestapo agent. It was the end of their friendship.

> Дружба не любит, чтобы ее пытали, это ее унижает и обесценивает. Если дружба требует испытаний, то

> есть материальных гарантий, то это не что иное, как духовный товарообмен. Нет, дружба -- это не доверие, купленное ценой испытаний, а доверчивость до всяких испытаний, вместе с тем это наслаждение, счастье от самой полноты душевной отдачи близкому человеку.[3]

Sharing and helping others are two additional aspects of the friendship theme that Iskander develops. The story Iz rasskazov o Čike shows this more positive side of childhood friendships. Čik allows other neighborhood children to ride his grandfather's horse. This included helping Lesik, a boy who had Cerebral Palsy, ride the horse. The story described the joy Čik felt since his friend was able to participate and enjoy himself. This helping hand is extended again in the povest' Den' i Noč' Čika when Čik takes Lesik along to gather resin to make into bubble gum. Čik enjoys Lesik's fresh viewpoint. Since everything is new to Lesik, it enables Čik to see the world through Lesik's eyes and recapture the initial joy experienced when that part of Čik's world was new and fresh to him too.

Friendship has its burdens too. In Den' i noč' Čika, Iskander learned inadvertantly that his friend Nika's father had been arrested during the purges. On his own initiative, he decided he would help protect Nika from this terrible truth for she did not know what had happened.

The competitivness between the boys is another important part of their world. The age old process of determining which boy is the leader is convincingly portrayed by Iskander. Den' i noč' Čika explores one such struggle involving Čik. To maintain his stature as the leader in his courtyard, Čik must fight a boy from another neighborhood. He would lose face if he backed down. Posramlenie fal'šivo-monetČikov shows how one boy tries to control the other boys in the neighborhood since he has the only soccer ball. It also describes how Iskander finally was able to break free from this control. Another aspect of how dependency affects relationships is portrayed in the story Vremja po časam. Here Erik forces Iskander to submit to brutal, somewhat sadistic games, merely to find out what time it is.

As children try to sort out their relationships, they attempt to exert their power over others. In the process, some children become bullies. Iskander's works study this problem as well. Bullies appear in several stories; however, they do not fare well. Tyranny of the strong over the weak is never rewarded. Instead the bully is punished for his bad behavior. Kaban is beaten by Čik's much smaller grandfather. As Kaban is bested in the story Iz rasskazov o Čike, another bully Keropcik is brought to justice in the story Vozmezdie. Čik sees KeropČik and friends overturn Alixan's tray of sweets in the bazaar.

Although Čik is smaller and powerless to prevent what happened, Čik tells his older, muscular friend Motja about what happened. Motja eventually finds Kerop̌ik and punishes him. Yet when Motja finally punishes Kerop̌ik by making him strip to his underpants in public, Čik can not help feeling sorry and embarassed for Kerop̌ik.

School is another subtheme of Iskander's childhood. This important part of the child's world is a major source of anxiety. Iskander graphically illustrates how grades, homework, and expectations of teachers and parents produce anxiety. Trinadcatyj podvig Geraklа describes the ensuing panic when Iskander does not have his math homework done. It is further compounded when he is called to the board to solve the problem he could not solve. Iskander notes how everyone is afraid of appearing ridiculous. It appears as if people are shamed into doing good work. Iskander lived in fear of not fulfilling his family's expectations of him. In Zaščita Čika, he goes to great lengths to keep them from learning of his behavior at school. When his teacher wants to talk to his mother or father, Čik spends an entire day devising an elaborate plan to prevent this. Since he must bring an adult, his only choice is his crazy uncle Kolja. He tempts his crazy uncle to leave home by offering him lemon-ade bought with money obtained in a trade with a friend. The success of his plan rests

on his uncle's silence. Luckily the teacher does all of the talking and Cik avoids an unpleasant scene at home.

Iskander shows in Pod sen'ju evkoliptov how children try to avoid schoolwork at all costs, sometimes going to unusual lengths to get good grades with minimal effort. Teachers, on the other hand, did their best to encourage students to do their work. When Iskander is teased and called "ot"javlennyj lentjaj," he does everything possible to maintain this image, including giving up homework. In class he does not take notes and pretends to fall asleep, while he listens attentively. Then Iskander volunteers to answer questions for the next day in advance before he forgets the new material, thus receiving good grades without having to study. However, the school decides to reform him, applying the method of concentrated education. The school succeeds in turning him not only into a good student, but into a potential silver medal-winner. The justification for this reform is that other slackers would envy the reformed student's achievements and soon follow suit of their own accord.

Along with friendship, Iskander is concerned with honesty in interactions with others. Iskander's inability to lie is the major factor in the breakdown of his friendship with his idol, Jura. All relationships need to be based on truth. As a boy, Iskander was disconcerted by the fact that adults would continually think one thing and

then say and do the opposite. Initially he took this as a game.

> Когда Чик был совсем маленький, он, слушая, как во дворе один взрослый, разговаривая с другим, говорит одно, а думает про другое, считал, что это такая игра. Чик замечал, что и другой взрослый при этом думает совсем про другое, так что никто никого не обманывает. Он только не поминал, почему они в конце игры не рассмеются и не скажут о том, что они хорошо поиграли.
>
> А иногда дома, когда собирались гости, Чик замечал, что начиналась всеобщая игра, когда все говорили про одно, а думали не только про другое, а просто про разное. Так что Чик не успевал проследить, кто про что думает, или просто уставал следить.
>
> Правда, случалось, что взрослые забывали про эту игру и кто-нибудь из них начинал рассказывать что-нибудь интересное и ничего другого при этом не думал, и тогда Чик с обожанием слушал этого человека.[4]

In Zapretnyi plod, Iskander tells on his sister who ate pork at a neighbors. This does not gain him any favor at home. On the contrary, his father punishes him severely for such behavior. Iskander took this lesson to heart.

> Но урок не прошел даром. Я на всю жизнь понял, что никакой высокий принцип не может оправдать подлости и предательства, да и всякое предательство -- это волосатая гусеница маленькой зависти, каким бы принципами оно ни прикрывалось.[5]

This need to speak the truth carried over into his adult life. A conscience is a valuable trait to possess, giving a person guidance throughout his childhood and adult years.

> И еще одно я твердо понял: все потерянное можно найти -- даже любовь, даже юность. И

> только потерянную совесть еще никто не находил.
> Это не так грустно, как может показаться, если учесть, что по рассеянности ее невозможно потерять.[6]

As Iskander moves on to describe his adult life, a major theme to appear is the emotion of love. Iskander examines numerous aspects, including the search for love, the trials and tribulations of young love, lost love, and marriage. The various apsects of young love are a major component of this theme. Iskander describes all the awkwardness of youth, the indecisiveness, plus planning and replanning a course of action. The initial contact could begin with an unsigned declaration of love, as it does in Morskoj skorpion and Pis'mo. After receiving such a letter, a young man is strongly affected. Vanity flattered, he goes off to discover the mysterious author.

The search for the right girl is a long, complicated process full of pit falls. It can begin anywhere--in class, in the library, in a crowd, on the metro, or at the movies. There will be many unsuccessful encounters along the way. There will be many bungled attempts to initiate contact and speak to the girl singled out as a good possibility. Sometimes it is only a missed opportunity to speak to someone as happens in Morskoj skorpion. At other times one person will not return the other's affection. Such problems are described in Morskoj skorpion and Sozvezdie kozlotura. The more serious problems of

lost love are considered as well. People can grow apart when separated from one another. While the young hero of Dom v pereulke is off serving in the army, his girlfriend falls in love with someone else. By the time he returns home, she has married her new love.

A major premise presented by Iskander is that men are attracted to women by their figures, walk, and laugh, Yet these things are not necessarlily tied to the make-up of a woman's soul. A man will find true love and happiness if he ignores the outer appearance and searches for someone with a pure soul that responds to his.

> Видно душа его, думал Сергей, подавала встречным девушкам более тонкие сигналы, чем те сигналы, которые мы подаем встречным женщинам, и, услышав ответ на них от этой маленькой девушки, она, душа его, благодарно ответила любовью и кристаллизировалась в любви.
>
> И подобно тому, думал он, когда нам нравится внешность женщины и мы влюбляемся в нее и, влюбившись, дорисовываем ее духовный облик именно таким, каким мы его хотели бы видеть, подобно этому, когда человек чувствует к женщине душевную близость, он ее мало привлекателнук внешность дорисовывает в согласии с обликом ее души.[7]

The people who search for and find a compatible soul also find happiness as Sergej's friend does and as Zaira and Valiko do.

Iskander frequently chats with the reader, digressing from the storyline of his works. As he talks about his life, a portrait of Iskander emerges from the texts. Iskander presents himself as a naive, somewhat bumbling person. His tone is light and humorous. These

digressions about Iskander contain many comments about writing which mesh together to form a separate theme of their own. The humorous vein carries over into this area. When Iskander relates how he became a writer, he states that he did so because he thought that it would be more interesting and profitable than cataloging the books of others. His writing process is not a sacred ritual, but rather a sham. He sits at the typewriter pretending to write as his family tries not to interfere, but in reality Iskander states that he is inventing or listening for the phone.

It becomes clear that Iskander admires good writing. Iskander loves a good storyteller, admiring the natural craft in others, encouraging them. His comments concerning writing at the Red Subtropics and elsewhere indicate his dispare over the state of writing in general in the Soviet Union.

Iskander mentions the necessity of humor in several works, yet he feels trapped by the label of humorist. He feels that the reader has come to expect this of him and will not accept him as a serious writer.

Truth in art is another topic Iskander turns to. He strongly believes that the author must be truthful as well as humorous. This imposes some problems for the Soviet writer, as Iskander shows in Sozvezdie Kozlotura. When Iskander tries to write down the things the kolkhoz

chairman says for an article about the goatibex, the chairman will not allow him to write anything down, saying that not every truth could be written down. The chairman says that he will inform Iskander if something is worth writing about.

This theme is closely connected with the theme of humor, another recurrent theme in Iskander's prose. Iskander asserts that humor can be attained only after descending to the depths of pessimism and discovering that there is nothing there either. The traces of the trip back from the abyss will be genuine humor. Humor is joined together with truth. For something is only truly humorous if it is truthful.

People need humor and thereby truth even if it is from a jester. One must not take oneself too seriously, otherwise it will lead to their own demise as it did in the case of ancient Rome. At the same time if you can laugh at something, it stops being as fearful. Since Iskander uses his gentle humor to poke fun at a number of sacred topics, he helps the society to laugh at its own excesses and problems, be they in the government sector or in private life.

The theme of Abkhazia is central to Iskander's works, which contain a wealth of information concerning Abkhazian customs. Many of the customs surrounding courtship and marriage are covered extensively in Iskander's prose.

Iskander explains that young people try to arrange meetings in a neutral home, which has no family ties to the prospective bride or groom. The groom would inform a distant relative that he would be arriving on a certain day with a stolen bride. At times the girl did not know of the abduction. This is illustrated in the chapter Umykanie from Sandro iz Čegema. At other times it was really the case that they eloped. The chapter Tali, Čudo Čegema illustrates this for Tali herself planned to meet Bagrat on the appointed evening. After the abduction, the bride's relatives try to stop the young lovers before the marriage is consumated. In Tali's case since they are too late, they leave the two in peace. In the chapter Umykanie, the relatives do not succeed in overtaking the two couples. At the end of ten days, the newlyweds return home to celebrate. But by no means are all marriages the result of abductions. Many marriages are arranged between two families. In such cases, the groom's relatives visit the bride's house. When both sides agree to the terms including the bride's dowry, a gun is fired into the air to seal the agreement. This procedure is illustrated in Brigadir Kjazym

The wedding celebration is accompanied by a huge feast. At the feast as at all joyous celebrations, a tamada heads the table giving toasts and entertaining the guest with stories. The guests frequently sing, dance,

and drink until dawn, as Iskander describes in the povest' Morskoj skorpion.

To be considered a proper groom, a man had to prove himself by performing some type of daring escapade. He might steal someone's horse as Kolčerukij did. Likewise a young man could take something else.

> В те времена в наших краях доблесть мужчины проверялась способностью с наибольшей дерзостью угнать чужого коня, стадо овец, или в крайнем случае корову.[8]

A proposal could be refused, as happened in the short story Slovo, if the intended groom had not proven his valor.

Futhermore, there are numerous descriptions of funerals, as well as references to the subject of death, which present the reader with an accurate, composite picture of these customs. When an Abkhazian dies a messenger of woe is sent out to the neighboring villages to inform everyone. The funeral is held at home. As relatives and friends come to the funeral, each mourner, after removing his hat, is accompanied up to the coffin by someone who is to prevent the mourner from injuring himself during his manifestations of grief. Everyone brings food for the funeral feast. While they drink in silence, the mourners listen to the words of wisdom from someone called upon to speak. The female relatives wail in the background. A husband, however, is expected to remain dry-eyed and to show no emotion at his wife's

funeral as he views the shawl-wrapped body of his wife. All follow a set ritual of mourning called "saxʏej-vaxʏej." Forty days after the death, a feast is held (a "Sorokovina") to honor the departed soul.

According to Abkhazian custom, a dead man must be buried in his family burial ground, no matter how far away he died, no matter how long it takes to discover where someone is buried. Tradition decrees that the deceased will only find peace and release his soul to heaven when he lies buried in Abkhazia.

Hospitality, symbolized by bread and salt, is exhibited in many aspects of everyday life. Iskander continuously points out various individual customs. When a person returns a container he borrowed, he must not return it empty. Instead he must put something it it and apologize if it is not completely full. Whenever an Abkhazian man is at home, his kitchen door must stand open all day long as a symbol that the owners are willing to receive a passing traveler and give him something to eat and drink. A closed door is considered to be the sign of a stingy host. Any thirsty or hungry traveler is welcome. If darkness overtakes someone along the road, he must be invited in to spend the night. It is even considered a matter of honor to take in a wounded abrek (an outlaw), despite the possibility of trouble from the government.

A deep respect for old age is also embeded in Abkhazian customs. Even an abrek would not dare raise a hand against a patriarch.

An interesting custom is brought out in the novel Sandro iz Čegema. A man cannot soak his feet in the same spot in the water of a river or stream after he drinks there. He must go downstream so as not to muddy the water. Allah will punish those who violate the customs.

In addition to having their fortunes told, the people consult with the mullah when they aren't sure how to interpret events. In the chapter Tali, Čudo Čegema of Sandro iz Čegema, Sandro and his wife call in the mullah to read a prayer of deliverance over their daughter's pillow and to determine if she is under the influence of forces of good or evil. The mullah is the only one who possesss and reads the Koran. He reads from the Koran and places an amulet around Tali's neck. People pay for his services by giving him poultry or livestock, perhaps a goat.

Personal and family honor are valuable qualities, to be protected at all costs. Relatives consider it their duty to avenge the wrongs inflicted upon a family name. It is considered in very poor taste to refuse the hospitality of a fellow Abkhazian without good reason. Personal integrity is highly regarded. Informers are

dealt with swiftly, the punishment matching the crime. It is an old Moslem custom to cut off an informer's ear and tongue.

According to another Abkhazian custom, a woman cannot use guns or other weapons. She will defile the weapon. At the same time, the weapon dishonors the woman. A woman can take up a gun only if there are no men left in her family to avenge spilled blood.

Along with presenting the reader with a wide array of customs, Iskander also gives a fairly detailed account of several aspects of rural life. Native Abkhazian food and drink are present in most works, sometimes even with descriptions of how a particular dish is prepared. Such items as mamaliga (corn hominy), čurek (unleavened round bread), halva (a mixture of honey and nuts), ajika (a spicy condiment from walnuts, garlic, red pepper, and other spices), hačapuri, kumys (fermented mares milk), sačivi (spicy walnut sauce), šašlyk (pieces of muton roasted on a spit), tabaka (spicy chicken), haš, lobio (spicy bean dish), čača (liquor from grape pressings), araki (strong fruit liquor), and ayran (mixture of yogurt and water) are present on the tables of Abkhazian homes. The reader learns about various aspects of farm life, encompassing the particulars of beekeeping, making wooden shingles, farming, hunting, goatherding, and tending to

the cows, horses, and poultry through a series of excellent genre pictures.

Problems relating to several diseases present in that area of the Soviet Union are also pointed out. Malaria, small pox, tuberculosis, and rabies are the four illnesses about which Iskander gives accounts. Although they get shots and medicine, people still follow many of the ways of folk-medicine. Relatives call in the "znaxarka" to prepare a potion in Slovo to ward off rabies and in Derevo detstva to get rid of Iskander's malaria attack. In the latter case, the znaxarka says Iskander must drink the urine of a pure white goat to rid his stomach of the malaria. The elaborate precautions surrounding an outbreak of small pox (called "carskij gonec") are reported in the story Utraty.

As Iskander describes life in Abkhazia, the history of the area is also presented and forms another major theme of Iskander's prose. He begins with ancient history, which occupies a small role in his works. In the first century B.C., Romans built fortifications at the site of what is now Sukhumi, originally established as the Greek city Dioscurias. In the story Angličanin s ženoj i rebenkom, Iskander takes the Englishman diving to try to find the walls of the ancient city said to exist in the sea off the shore of Sukhumi. Then in the sixth century A.D., the "Great Abkhazian Wall" was built to keep out

maurading northern tribes. Iskander specifically states in Derevo detstva that he frequently played along the wall during his childhood, unearthing the bones of distant ancestors. These ancestors, Svans are an ancient race native to the high mountain valleys in the Caucasus. They still practice several ancient customs including polygamy. There are a number of references to the lore about this race present in several works, including Svjatoe ozero and Sandro iz Čegema.

However, the majority of the history concerns Abkhazia from the mid-1840s to the present. There were a series of revolts in the 1840s, and Abkhazian peasants emigrated to Turkey, deluded by promises of wealth and religious tolerance. This emigration was repeated once more in the 1860's following the annexation of Abkhazia by the Russian Empire. Some of the emigrants returned to their villages in the 1880s. Iskander informs the reader of this through the stories told by his grandfather in Deduška.

> А нам до этого говорили, что в Турции хлебоносные деревья и сахар из земли прямо, как соль добывают.[9]

> Да нам говорили, --объясняют наши, -- что в Турции прямо из земли роют, как соль, и хлебесные деревья растут. Вот мы и решили -- прокормимся, раз деревья хлебоносные и сахару каждый себе может накопать. Да мы и мусильманство, по правде сказать, из-за этого приняли. Нас царь предлагал охристьянить, да мы отказались.[10]

Rebel outlaws formed bands in the highlands of the Caucases and resisted the annexation by Russia.

Iskander's grandfather also tells Iskander about abreks in the story Dedu$\check{\text{s}}$ka. The reader gains more information concerning them in the novel Sandro iz Čegema. Sandro's cousin is the abrek Sčaščiko.

The period of time from 1917 to 1921 was a time of revolution and civil war for Abkhazia as it was throughout Russia. In April, 1918, Zordenia, a Menshevik, declared Transcaucasia to be independent of Russia. The territory consisted of Abkhazia, Georgia, Azerbaidzhan, and Armenia. The Battle of the Kodor took place in May, 1918. The Mensheviks gained a victory here in their battle for control of Transcaucasia. These events are described in the novel Sandro iz Čegema. Iskander devotes an entire chapter to the battle over the river Kodor. Sandro was a witness to the events. Elsewhere in the novel, Sandro and other characters comment on the difficulty of life during unstable times when the government changed hands a number of times. Groups of soldiers and deserters roamed the country, looting as they went. The first chapter of Sandro iz Čegema described the plight of the Armenian tobacco merchant at the hand of the Mensheviks.

The Red Army regained control of Transcaucasia in 1921, making Abkhazia a Republic of the Soviet Union. Nestor Lakoba, who appears repeatedly in the novel, was made the leader. Lakoba along with many rulers are

present at a feast for Stalin. Included among those present are Beria, Voroshilov, and Kalinin.

Lenin put his New Economic Policy into effect beginning in 1921. Iskander describes the effects of NEP on the Persian merchant Alixan. The policies become more and more restrictive and, in effect, force Alixan to close down his coffee shop and resort to selling home-made candy and steamed walnuts at the market and on the pier.

Between 1922 and 1923, Lenin wrote a secret document. In this document he warned of the danger of a break between Trotskij and Stalin. Lenin also voiced his opposition to Stalin's policies against minorities. Iskander is quite outspoken in his support of Lenin and hatred of Stalin. This comes through clearly in the chapter Xarlampo i Despina in Sandro iz Čegema, Novye Glavy. A distorted version of these guidelines specifically pro-Abkhazia is presented here. Iskander's feelings for Stalin are apparent, not only in this chapter but throughout the novel and in many other works. Aesopian language is used to identify Lenin as "tot, čto xotel xorošego, no ne uspel." At the same time, Iskander nicknames Stalin "bol'šie usy." Frequently this is how the narrator or another character refers to Stalin instead of by name. In many works, someone will say that he dislikes mustaces in general, or men who have mustaces. In the chapter Piry Valtasara, Iskander goes as far as

portraying Stalin as a thief and murderer in the days before he came to power. Throughout the novel, there are references to Stalin as a vampire or to his vampirish programs.

The problems inherent in the power structure under a dictator are explored by Iskander, particulary the attempts by secret police to enlist the help of individuals. Letnim dnem discusses the period of German history under Hitler and the Gestapo, detailing how the Gestapo, fishers of souls, try to trap someone into working for them. Kroliki i udavy, puts the problems of dictator and informers on the allegorical level by describing the social structure of rabbits and boa constrictors in Africa. Here too the secret police try to get men to sell a small piece of their soul. People convince themselves that they have only done one small deed; not realizing that once they commit a treacherous act, no matter how small, they can no longer regain their pure soul. Iskander also describes the allure of power and the affect this has on the actions of those under its spell.

The year 1929 marks the beginning of the collectivization of agriculture. The widespread resistance in Abkhazia is reflected in Iskander's prose. Xabug, Sandro's father, explains the feelings of those peasants who resist the government's efforts. He could

not understand the government policies.

> Так было непонятно, где будет колхоз держать скотину, если ее соберут со всего села? Почему не строят заранее больших коровников и крытых загонов для овец и коз? Какая сила заставит крестьян хорошо работать на общем поле, когда иной и на своей усадьбе работает кое-как?
>
> А главное, чего не выразить словом и чего никогда не поймут эти чесучевые писари, кто же захочет работать, а может и жить на земле, если осверниться сама Тайна любви тысячелетняя, безотчетная, как тайна пола? Тайна любви крестьянина к своему полю, к своей яблоне, к своей корове, к своему улью, к своему шелесту на своем кукурузном поле, к своим виноградным гроздьям, раздавленным своими ногами в своей давильне. И пусть это вино потом расхлещет и расхлебает Сандро со своими прощалыгами, да Тайна-то останется с ним, ее-то они никак не расхлещут и не расхлебают.
>
> И если он выручает деньги за свой скот или табак, так тут дело не только в деньгах, которые тоже нужны в хозяйстве, а дело в том, что и на самих этих деньгах, чего никак не поймут все эти чесучевые грамотеи, на самих этих деньгах лежит сладкое колдовство Тайны и, может, тем они хороши, что, щупая их, всегда можно прикоснуться к Тайне.[11]

Among his neighbors and relatives, Xabug says after each drink: "Čtoby étot kumxoz oprokinulsja, kak éta rjumka." (Kumxoz is Abkhazian for kolxoz.) The workers on the kolkhoz are described as lazy workers. The government regulations concerning the kolkhoz are shown to be illogical. Plans are drawn up and there is no leeway given for adverse weather conditions. An independent farm owner, Daur, tells Xabug that the latest directive from the government tells the kolkhox workers to harvest the tobacco crop on a certain date according to the "plan" even though the crop was not mature enough and needed more

time before it would be ready for harvest. Earlier in the year, the low-lying fields had not dried out properly before the corn was planted, so the crop turned out to be stunted. Again the "plan" dictated the proper time, not weather conditions. Indeed it is not only men, but even Xabug's mule who expresses the views that the kolkhoz is bad and the workers are unenthusiastic and lack dedication. The government had a program for the consolodation of Kolkhozes. Iskander brings out the illogical manner in which this too was accomplished. In the povest' Sozvezdie Kozlotura, two kolkhozes are merged together. But the farms had totally different crops. One kolkhoz produced tea, the other tobacco. Neither chairman knew or cared much about the other crop. Many hard feelings were created when one chairman was promoted over the second one.

In contrast private plots are more productive than on the government land. The workers take their time here and make sure that they fertilized the land with manure, even if only that found along the road.

The period from 1936 to 1938 was the time of purges conducted by Beria under Stalin's orders. There are numerous references to the purges in Iskander's prose. Iskander refers to this period as "Čuma tridcat' sed'mogo goda." The people who were taken away during this plague are decent people, not traitors or criminals. Although

the purges lasted a year and then stopped, those arrested were not released. It can be inferred from what is stated in Sandro iz Čegema, that Iskander's father was among those taken in '37:

> Давным-давно, когда сестра его выходила замуж за парня из Мухуса, он, ехал в числе сопровождающих невесту....
>
> Того парня, мужа его сестры, тоже взяли в тридцать седьмом году, и он тогда так же, как и кунаку, предлагал ему спрятаться в лесу и переждать гнилое время. Тот тоже не захотел прятаться и вот сестра его осталась одна в городе с двумя[12] детьми на руках. Конечно, родные ей помогают, да и сама она работает санитаркой в больнице, но легко ли в городе одной с тремя детьми.[13]

Although others, such as Pata Pateraja, lead dancer of the Abkhazian Song and Dance Troupe, don't avoid arrest, Sandro narrowly manages to avoid it by resigning from the troupe.

During this time of fear, informers are prevalent. Xabug comments on the fact that informers have even appeared in Chegem. Two incidents involving anonymous letters denouncing people are recounted. In one instance described in the short story Kolčerukij, an anonymous letter is received by the kolkhoz chairman denouncing Kolceruij for planting tung trees above his grave. The second instance involves a letter received by the newspaper Red Subtropics denouncing the kolkhoz chairman suspected of mistreating the goatibex. Although neither case results in an arrest, the possible problems raised by a "written document" are vividly conveyed.

World War II breaks out. In 1942 the Germans invade Abkhazia, trying to gain control of the oil fields in the northern Caucasus. Loss of loved ones, a disrupted economy, shortages, lack of workers on the kolkhoz, and the bombing of cities are all aspects of the war that Iskander brings out in his prose. In Xiromant, two German parachutists are even captured.

Various ethnic groups are uprooted by Stalin in 1948. They are resettled in remote areas. In the chapter Xarlampo i Despina of Sandro iz Čegema, novye glavy, Iskander mentions that the Greeks are deported to Kazakhstan via trucks in one such mass relocation.

In 1953 Stalin died and Khrushchev emerged as the new ruler. The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was held in 1956. It is at this congress that Khrushchev denounced Stalin and his cult of the personality. Chegemians approved of the speech, Iskander states in Sandro iz Čegema, novye glavy.

In the 1960's Khrushchev dictated that the government would only buy bay leaves from the kolkhoz. This was an effort to cut down on profiteering by private individuals. Sandro complained that the government would not buy the bay leaves that he had harvested since he was not associated with any kolkhoz.

Iskander also describes a number of problems concerning life in Abkhazia under Soviet rule. Some

matters are briefly referred to, such as the campaign against religion. In Sandro iz Čegema in the chapter Istoria molel'nogo dereva, churches are to be closed to deprive the priest of his forum. In accordance the Greek Church in Mukhus is closed. Later it is opened and closed a number times.

During the time of the cult, the names of local rivers, mountains, and valleys were changed from their ancient Abkhazian names. Even after the end of this period of Soviet rule the names were not changed back.

Iskander covers the theme of campaigns extensively. They are a prevelant part of Soviet life and are organized for any conceivable reason. Campaigns such as those of Lysenko were supposedly based on scientific evidence. The story line of Sozvezdie Kozlotura centers around one such campaign to promote a hypothetical animal, the goatibex. Word came down from Moscow that the Red Subtropics must promote the goatibex. The campaign included a write-in campaign to educate the public and to invite questions concerning the goatibex and a poetry contest.

Iskander also provides the reader with glimpses into the seamier side of Soviet life. Bribery is one such problem. It is possible to get a room in a hotel that is full with the right connections or a bribe. Auto inspectors are often on the take. In Dolžniki, Iskander's cousin Vanečka Mamba, a wheeler-dealer who is always

trying to get an extra ruble transporting fruit illegally or dealing in gas, complains about the inspectors. Either they will not take a bribe, want too much, or else along one stretch of road three inspectors take bribes yet the last one will not. Mamba also talks himself out of a speeding ticket. Sandro's favorite Tengo, another road inspector, also takes bribes.

Problems in the economy are another topic found in Iskander's prose. There are shortages of consumer goods and government stores are inadequately stocked. To fill the need, peasants take their crops to Moscow to sell at the market at higher than normal prices. A number of people have dealings on the black market. People board the trains at rural stops to sell produce to the riders. In addition to Vanecka Mamba, the dentist in Sandro iz Čegema is stealing gold and profiteering.

Government regulations are totally inconsistent. To illustrate this, Iskander retells the story of his aunt's cow. The cow could not stay with relatives in the country. A new government regulation required all cows to remain with the person to whom they are registered. By law it was permissible to keep a cow in the city; however, it was illegal to graze it within city limits.

The drinking problem is a concern of several of Iskander's works. In particular Iskander is concerned with drunk workers and drunk drivers. On a bitter cold

evening Iskander comes across a drunk as he leaves the subway station. Iskander attempts to get him home, but the drunk refuses to tell Iskander (or cannot remember) where he lives. Iskander compromises by getting the drunk to a protected, more populated area. In another story Pod evkaliptom, two drunk factory workers are sitting and drinking near a beer stand by the train station, obviously a common sight. Then in Sandro iz Čegema, novye glavy, one of Iskander's relatives is arrested for drunk driving, a common occurence for him, and has his license suspended.

The drinking problem is linked with the problem of hooligans. In Posramlenie fal'šivomonetčikov a man is lying on the grass in what appears to be a drunken stupor when a hooligan attempts to rob him. However, the "drunk" rolls over and traps the thief's hand in his pocket. Hooligans occur elsewhere in Iskander's prose. Kaban, the neighborhood bully, attempts to intimidate Iskander's grandfather. This eighteen-year-old youth shows no respect for his elders and even dares to make an obscene gesture in his direction.

Another hooligan called Keropčik causes problems in the story Vozmezdie. To have a good time at the bazaar, Keropcik and a group of friends kicked over the merchant Alixan's tray, breaking the glass tray and spilling candy onto the wet pavement.

The criminal element of Abkhazian life is also shown by Iskander. His world is also peopled with thieves, armed assailants, and murderers. Jason is a thief, who has already been in jail for having a fist fight in a resturant. Čik suspects that Jason even killed a man during a robbery. Whether this is true or whether Jason was merely bragging, remains unclear. In Morskoj skorpion, Volodja is attacked by an angry driver wielding a crowbar. The driver's friend comes to back him up and also goes after Volodja with his crowbar. Outnumbered and backed to the wall, Volodja remembers that he has a pen knife in his pocket. Volodja pulls it and uses it as one man attacks again, unfortunately killing his assailant in the process. Volodja is arrested and sent to prison.

Even the subject of prostitution is briefly touched on. Iskander merely notes its existence without moralizing about it. In Iz rasskazov o Čike, Čik encounterss a prostitute at the police station when he gets in trouble for grazing his cow in the city. She has been arrested for engaging in a forbidden profession. The woman, who has a brightly colored dress and a heavily made-up face, is given twenty-four hours to leave town.

The indoctrination of young minds is a further topic presented by Iskander. Youth magazines exhort children to be watchful for enemy activities. In Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil a young pioneer describes in one such

magazine how he exposed a German spy. Iskander falls under the spell of the story and decides that his own uncle must be a spy as well and devises a plan to unmask him.

Not only does Iskander unfold the customs and history of Abkhazia but he does this for another purpose than simply to inform. Iskander takes the position of many village prose writers. He is adamant that this old, traditional way of life is of value. Roots, ties to the past and the land, are important.

> Краем детства я застал патриархальную деревенскую жизнь Абхазии и навсегда полюбил ее. Может быть, я идеализирую уходящую жизнь? Может быть. Человек не возвышает то, что он любит. Идеализируя уходящий образ жизни, возможно, мы сами того не сознавая, предъявляем счет будущему. Мы ему как бы говорим:
>
> --Вот что мы теряем, а что ты нам даешь взамен?
>
> Пусть будущее призадумается над этим, если оно вообще способно думать.[14]

Many of the problems present in Soviet life are the result of changes in the way of life. Long standing traditions have been broken. The peasant is divorced from the land and placed in the collective where he works the government's land. The workers are missing the all important tie to the land, "their land," and no longer care about the crops. The plan dictates how and when planting and harvesting should be done, rather than

weather conditions. Young people have lost respect for their elders. People are no longer friendly and hospitable. They distrust one another, even inform on each other. Along with general dissatisfaction and alienation comes an increase in the drinking problem. As the new Soviet man loses or throws away tradition to follow the new path to building communism, Iskander wants to know what beliefs of equal value are being substituted.

One hears echoes of this sentiment in many of Iskander's works, as in Lov forelI v verxov'jax Kodora, in which Iskander muses on the lost fishing ability of Abkhazians.

> Вообще среди абхазцев редко встретишь рыбака. Для народа испокон веков жившего у моря, это странность, я думаю, так было не всегда. Мне кажется, несчастное переселение в Турцию в прошлом веке захватило прежде всего жителей приморья и речных долин. Вместе с ними, наверное, и оборвался для абхазцев рыбный промысел.
>
> Если в народной памяти, подумалось мне, могут быть провалы, забвенье таких зримых промыслов, то как же надо беречь более хрупкие ценности, чтобы они не исчезли, не улетучились.[15]

The home of Iskander's grandfather in the country is an oft repeated image running as a leitmotif through Iskander's works, reminding the reader of the past and its value. Iskander reflects on this in Sandro iz Čegema, Sandro iz Čegema. novye glavy, Morskoj skorpion, Utraty, and Sozvezdie Kozlotura. Iskander's sister concurs with this feeling in Utraty, saying that it was a mistake to abandon the country. In Morskoj skorpion, Iskander again

feels the pull of ties to his homeland and wants his daughter to be aware of her roots. This feeling is expressed best in Sozvezdie kozlotura. In all, twenty-two pages are entirely devoted to life in the Abkhazian country-side. Iskander lists the aspects of daily life he misses.

> Сейчас, где бы я ни жил, у меня нет и в помине той жаркой радостной тяги в город. Наоборот, я все чаще и чаще чувствую, что мне не хватает дедушкиного дома.
>
> Может быть, потому что дедушкиного дома уже нет -- старые умерли, а молодые переехали в город или поближе к нему. А когда он был, все не хватило времени бывать там чаще, я его все оставлял про запас. И вот теперь там никого нет, и мне кажется, что я ограблен, что какой-то мой главный корень обрублен.
>
> Даже если я там бывал редко, самой своей жизнью, своим очажным дымом, доброй тенью своих деревьев он помогал мне издали, делал меня смелей и уверенней в себе. Я был почти неуязвим, потому что часть моей жизни, мое начало шумело и жило в горах. Когда человек ощущает свое начало и свое продолжение, он щедрей и правильней располагает своей жизнью и его трудней ограбит, потому что он не все свои богатства держит при себе.[16]

It is Iskander's belief that other nations besides Abkhazia do not have the same beauty of customs nor do they value family ties. Even the Abkhazians are losing these desirable qualities. While some of this is due to inevitable changes in society, it is also partially due to government policies. Nations are up-rooted and settled far from their native land due to fear, as well as a desire to make the Soviet Union one harmonious whole, speaking one language only. Iskander laments this change:

> ...Сегодня не слышно греческой и турецкой речи на нашей земле, и душа моя печалится и слух мой осиротел. Я с детства привык к нашему маленькому Вавилону. Я привык слышать в воздухе родины абхазскую речь, русскую речь, грузинскую речь, мингрельскую речь, армянскую речь, турецкую речь, эндурскую речь /да, да, дядя Сандро, эндурскую тоже!/ и теперь, когда из этого сладостного многоголосья, из брызжущего свежестью щебета народов, выброшены привычные голоса, нет радости слуху моему, нет упоения воздухом родины![17]

At the same time Iskander mourns the passing of the old way of life in the country, he extols the innate wisdom of the people. In Sandro iz Čegema, novye glavy, Iskander states that many people from the villages and country are illiterate yet they possess natural wisdom. Their souls are purer. The peasant lacks any temptation to hypocrasy. Kjazym is referred to as a disguised King Lear among the Philistines. Expanding on this in Utraty, Iskander states that people can cram their head full of knowledge, yet still have a minuscule, undeveloped soul incapable of understanding the good in others. These city dwellers are consumed with envy of the greater wealth of their neighbors.

The people are described as a healing power. It is an eternally living temple, which for centuries has been fostered. Parents have instilled in their children a mystical respect and love of the people.

Tied in with the love of Abkhazia is Iskander's deep love of nature. Iskander's links with Turgenev and Čexov can be clearly seen in this area. His lyrical

descriptions also capture the nuances of the world around him, describing nature fully, giving the names of the many and varied trees, bushes, flowers, birds, and fish. Passages are written so that sounds, smells, colors, and textures are vividly pointed out. Vickie Babenko is correct when she states that Iskander captures nature with a painter's brush.[18] Iskander describes nature as: "zemlja pokryta tolstym, slabo pružinjaščim sloem prošlogodnej listvy"[19] ; "telesnyj zapax razomlevšej na solnce zeleni"[20]; "slyšal čem-to volnujuščij šelest zelenyx veršin"[21]; "ja vse ze zamečal krasotu moščnyx, temno-serebristyx stvolov byka"[22] "ujutyx podnozij bol'šix derev'ev, zavalennyx kalenoj prošlogodnej listvoj"[23]; and

> Воздух леса пронизан беспрерывным щебетом птиц. Голоса их только сначала кажутся пением, а потом начинаешь чувствовать, что они переговариваются, перекликаются, переругиваются, пересмеиваются, а то и просто перемигиваются.[24]

From the detailed pictures of birds (such as that of the woodpecker in Derevo detstva), of fish (in Morskoj skorpion), and of beekeeping (in Bol'šoj den' bol'šogo doma), it is evident that Iskander has observed life in the forest and sea carefully. Continuing the tradition of Turgenev and Čexov, the forest and sea are not merely the background for stories, but active participants. It is as if they are friends and Iskander wants us to share in their beauty.

Nature is portrayed as friendly, bright, and pleasant. It has a calming influence:

> Уходить не хотелось. Оттянув на бок тяжелый карман с рыбами, я лег животом на теплый, прогретый солнцем ствол. Он слегка покачивался под напором воды, толкавшей погруженные в воду ветви. Близость глубокой, быстро бегущей воды усиливала ощущение покоя, неподвижности. От нагретого ствола подымался винный запах. Солнечные лучи сквозь мокрые брюки горячо притрагивлись к ногам. Мох щекотал щеку, ствол покачивался, я погружался в сладкую дрему. Муравей медленно пробирался по моей шее.
>
> Сквозь дрему я подумал, что давно не испытывал такого покоя.[25]

The two main images from nature found in Iskander's works are the forest and the sea. The forest is mighty, brambly, interlaced with branches and roots. It is cool, inviting, and refreshing. Iskander portrays the forest as an animate being, "vetvi, omyvaemye vodoj, zeleneli kak ni v čem ne byvalo."[26] Above the forest, there is a living sky. Stars tremble and sway. Hollow-clouds cut up the sky.

Iskander loves the sea more than anything. As a child he made off for the beach whenever possible. The sea is always powerful and fresh. It too is a living entity, which laughs and caresses: "Za stenoj živet čto-to moguščee i prekrasnoe, i ne uspokoitsja, poka ne prikosnetsja k nemu."[27] It too is usually friendly. But there is another side to the sea, for it can turn cold, indifferent, and hateful. The water which previously instilled a sense of peace suddenly turns into a hostile

current: "Voda vse vraždebnej šumela vokrug menja"[28]; and "Nu i čert, podumal ja, eščе raz čuvstvuja zlobnoe userdie s kakim menja taščila voda."[29] Another time after almost drowning, it is described as a dirty swamp, "slovno ja plyl v teplom, grjaznom bolote"[30]. Yet despite the fact that the sea was dangerous, it still drew Iskander to it. He still loved it and sought solace from it:

> Он почувствовал, что море, которое он так любил может быть жестоким и равнодушным, но все равно он его любил, как любят жизнь, зная, что она может быть и равнодушной и жестокой, и все-таки упрямо ожидая от нее чуда счастья.[31]

The beauty of nature needs to be preserved. In his concern about this Iskander is associated with many other contemporary writers, including Rasputin, Kazakov, and Astafev. One of the tasks of mankind is to prevent the poacher and careless tourist from spoiling the natural beauty found in the country. Iskander states this strongly in the story Svjatoe ozero. The mountain lake must be protected even if only through the help of half-believed ancient myths.

Iskander is a nationalist writer. Abkhazian life in general, comprising the history and customs of life there, is a major theme. Iskander repeatedly states that he places a high value on life in the country. This places him squarely among the village prose writers including Kazakov, Astafev, Rasputin, and Nagibin (particularly in

their struggle for the preservation of the natural beauty found in the country). Like Kazakov, Iskander must leave the city and return to the country to be refreshed. It is among nature these writers and their characters feel at home. Here the individual is free to examine life along with its personal values. In keeping with the works of Rasputin and Astafev, Iskander is concerned about the changes occurring in society.

Major shifts in values are taking place. All these writers want to be sure that the old way of life is not lost forever and at least that principles of equal worth replace those that disappear as the country continues to move in new directions and to modernize. Iskander differs from the other village prose writers in the local of his country and the tone of his works. Instead of the cold Siberian landscape of Astafev and Rasputin, Iskander describes the sunny coastal town of Suxumi. Along with the warmer climate, Iskander's tone is lighter, tinged with satire and humor. While concerned with the same themes Iskander avoids the heavier, more depressing tone of Kazakov and Rasputin.

Iskander's childhood is a central theme running through his prose. His analyses of family ties and friendships are very astute and successfully convey the nuances of interpersonal relationships. Iskander focuses

on the personal, emotional response of a boy just entering adolescence to the world around him.

The adult also responds emotionally to the world. The search for love becomes a significant theme in those works concerning Iskander's adult years. His descriptions of an awkward, inexperienced youth attempting to find the right girl are superb analyses of this stage of life. However, Iskander is pessimistic about his own ability to find true love, for he is attracted by physical beauty rather than spiritual beauty.

Abkhazia is the single most important theme in Iskander's works outside of his childhood. Iskander is a highly nationalistic writer who is concerned about the fate of his tiny country. He creates a detailed picture of life in Abkhazia, emphasizing the traditional aspects of life there. An important message directly related to this is carried by his works. Traditional values are being eroded by the new Soviet way of life. Iskander, as do many village prose writers, makes a strong plea that beliefs of equal value be substituted in their place.

Nature is also extremely important to Iskander. This love of the land, connecting him with Turgenev and Čexov as well as Kazakov and many other contemporary writers, is deeply felt in his works.

Although Iskander often approaches his themes with humor, he takes the craft of writing and his themes seriously. His mission, the writer's mission, is to speak the truth.

Notes

[1]Fazil' Iskander, Vermja sčastlivyx naxodok (Mosocw: "Molodaja gvardija," 1973), p. 25.

[2]F. Iskander, Sozvezdia kozlotura, in his Derevo detstva (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel'," 1970), p. 274.

[3]F. Iskander, Letnim dnem, in his Derevo detstva (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel'," 1970), p. 201.

[4]F. Iskander, Den' Čika, in his Pervoe delo (Moscow: "Detskaja literatura," 1978), p. 125.

[5]F. Iskander, Zapretnyj plod, in his Pervoe delo (Moscow: "Detskaja literatura," 1978), p. 46.

[6]F. Iskander, Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok (Moscow: "Molodaja gvardija," 1973), p. 25

[7]F. Iskander, Morskoj skorpion, in his Pod sen'ju greckogo orexa (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel'," 1979), p. 338.

[8]F. Iskander, Slovo, in his Zapretnyj plod (Moscow: "Molodaja gvardija," 1966), p. 16.

[9]F. Iskander, Deduška, Novyj mir, XLVI, No. 7 (1968), 67.

[10]Ibid.

[11]F. Iskander, Sandro iz Čegema (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979), p. 142.

[12]The English translation of The Gospel According to Chegem (New York: Vintage, 1984) p. 59 translates this as "three." The next sentence of this quote also gives the number of children as three on p. 58.

[13]Sandro iz Čegema [Ardis], pp. 460-1.

[14]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[15] F. Iskander, Lov foreli v verxov'jax Kodora, in his Derevo detstva (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel'," 1970), p. 129.

[16] F. Iskander, Sozvezdie kozlotura, in his Derevo detstva (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel'," 1970), p. 270.

[17] F. Iskander, Sandro iz Čegema, novye glavy (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981), pp. 79-80.

[18] Vickie Babenko, "Fazil Iskander: An Examination of his Satire," Russian Language Journal, XXX, No. 106 (1976), 131-42.

[19] Iskander, Večernjaja doroga, in his Pervoe delo (Moscow: "Detskaja literatura, 1978)," p. 63.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 65.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 65-66.

[24] F. Iskander, Dedušką, in his Pervoe delo (Moscow: "Detskaja literatura," 1978), p. 93.

[25] Lov foreli v verxov'jax Kodora, pp. 136-37.

[26] Ibid., p. 136.

[27] F. Iskander, Rasskaz o more, in his Pervoe delo (Moscow: "Detskaja literatura," 1978), p. 6

[28] Lov foreli v verxov'jax Kodora, p. 138.

[29] Ibid., p. 139.

[30] F. Iskander, Serdce, in his Zaščita Čika (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel'," 1983), p. 251.

[31] F. Iskander, Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju, Junost', No. 6 (1975), p. 31.

Chapter Two

Main Characters

The capacity to characterize is one of the most important abilities of a fiction writer. Iskander is a master at this craft. The people of Abkhazia come to life in the pages of his prose. Their lives unfold in Sukhumi, the capital of Abkhazia, the countryside surrounding this city, in the made-up setting of Čegem in Eastern Abkhazia, and in Moscow. These people are characters based on Iskander's relatives, neighbors, and friends, carefully chosen for their colorful personalities.

The reader will encounter many of these characters repeatedly in Iskander's works. In this manner a network of more than two dozen characters is created allowing the reader to learn about additional aspects of their personalities and lives. Iskander's works form one continuous whole, merging together as if comprising a huge jigsaw puzzle or mosaic picture of Abkhazian life.

These characters do not reflect the positive hero of the Socialist realist tradition. Many of his characters have their feet firmly planted in the past. The old traditions still influence their way of life. These survivors of the past are not exposed nor are they held up for scorn. There is no model of the New Soviet Man

presented for them to follow. There is no movement toward a new and better Soviet state. Rather Iskander's writing follows the tradition of the little man in literature. Iskander himself states in the introduction to Sandro iz Čegema:

> Следуя традициям русской классической литературы, показавшей полность душевной жизни так называемого маленького человека, я пытаюсь в меру своих сил раскрыть значительность эпического существования маленького народа.[1]

His main characters include a tailor who works at home on the side, a palm-reader, Iskander's crazy uncle, men who have not joined the kolkhoz, and children whose fathers have been arrested in the purges.

The most prominent character in his early works is Iskander as a boy of about ten years old. He appears in more than two dozen stories.[2] His alter ego--Čik--is portrayed in another seven works.[3] In many works the members of Iskander's family are described in detail. Iskander has a large extended family. Iskander's immediate family consists of his father, mother, an older brother, and an older sister, all of whom remain nameless. Several relatives live upstairs from them: Iskander's favorite aunt, his crazy uncle Kolja, and his grandmother. Many neighbors are also represented in these works. The Rich Tailor and his son Onik live upstairs as well. Alixan, a merchant who sells candy and roasted chestnuts,

lives in a shanty in the courtyard. In addition to Onik, several other children who live in the courtyard are Iskander's friends: Lesik, Nika, and Sonka. The palm-reader was a frequent visitor in the courtyard. On his trips to the country Iskander frequently stayed with his grandfather and Uncle Kjazym. Kolčerukij lived nearby. Kjazym's brother, Uncle Sandro, is another relative Iskander met and visited when he was an adult.

Iskander describes a character through his gestures, conversations, and interactions with other. Conversations are sprinkled with slang, colorful idioms, and Turkic and Abkhazian words to help individualize a person and at the same time to give the works the flavor of Abkhazian life. Iskander is skilled at using a key feature or mannerism to capture the essence of a person. It forms a leit-motif, repeated in subsequent works. Examples would be the Rich Tailor constantly appearing on his balcony and Alixan's "kruglye brovi nad kruglymi glazami." Iskander includes many realistic details in his rendering of a person's habits and work. In describing Kjazym, Iskander includes several excellent genre pictures of Kjazym engaged in bee-keeping and in lancing an abcess on a cow. These details contribute to the construction of a separate identity as well as to the determination of that person's place in Abkhazian life.

A large number of Iskander's autobiographical works are told by an adult narrator, looking back on his own childhood. Several other works center around a narrator who tells about a young boy named Čik. Čik's attitude and background closely identify him with Iskander as a child. They have the same relatives, friends, and dog, and they share many of the same experiences. Although these stories are about a child, they are not written specifically for children. Told by an adult reflecting on his youth, the stories reveal psychological insight into a particular relationship or side of the boy's personality, as he analyzes his own actions and those of the adults in his world.

In the earliest stories of his childhood, the reader learns little or nothing of Iskander's physical description, having to guess that Iskander/Čik is about ten years old, quite strong, yet somewhat small for his age. Instead, since Iskander portrays himself in challenging situations, one learns about the boy through his words and actions in response to problems that develop, whether he fights off his aunt's rooster with a chair, rides to the mill alone to get corn ground, or teaches himself to swim.

The boy has a complex make-up. He is portrayed as an honest, feeling child having a highly developed sense of right and wrong, generally atuned to the false behaviour

in others, particularly adults, as shown in Dolgi i strasti and in the stories about Čik such as Čaepitie i ljubov' k mor'ju. He divides other children into those who have learned that adults are capable of saying one thing and doing or thinking another and those who are naive and believe what adults say. Few children come to this realization about the hypocrisy. At he same time that he offers profound insight, he is often naive in his interpretation of the world. Iskander's narrator is reminiscent of Tolstoj's young narrator in the trilogy Detstvo, Otročestvo, and JUnost', as well as the boy Alexej in Gor'kij's Detstvo. Iskander uses Tolstoj's technique of ostranenie to have the boy comment on the world arround him, viewing things from a fresh perspective.

Along the same vein, the boy does not go against his sense of justice, even to support his idol. In the story Moj kumir, Jura, Iskander's idol, tries to pick a fight with a much smaller boy. He insists that the other boy started the whole thing. When Jura turns to Iskander for support, it is not forthcoming. Iskander can not back up his friend in a lie even though it means the end of their friendship. He finds it difficult to tell a lie and resents it if someone puts him in the position that necessitates a lie.

Another characteristic is his loyalty to family and friends. Iskander/Čik is quite compassionate in his dealings with the other children. Lesik, one of the boys in the courtyard, suffers from Cerebal Palsy. Čik goes to great lengths to include Lesik in such activities as making chewing gum from resin and riding Čik's grandfather's horse.

Iskander/Čik is shown to be quite cunning as well. Iskander develops elaborate plans in Vremja po časam to find out what time it is and avoid having people find out that he does not know how to tell time. He eventually figures out that he can learn to tell time without admitting to anyone that he does not know how, by standing in front of the store with a clock over its door and listening to the people as they go past.

Iskander draws a three-dimensional portrait of the boy, who is not the perfect child. Iskander/Čik has his share of short-comings. He attempts to steal sausage from the school cafeteria in Moj kumir, tells on his sister for eating pork (thereby breaking the Moslem prohibition against eating pork) in Zapretnyj plod, and teases his crazy Uncle Kolja (indeed he even decides that Uncle Kolja is a German spy and tries to provoke him into revealing himself) among other things.

This is a portrait of a dynamic character. The climax in many of these works comes in a realization about

himself or another main character in the story. Due to his highly developed sense of right and wrong, Iskander/Čik accurately judges the activities of the world around him, even if with a somewhat childish interpretation. Thus the reader encounters the boy at a time of discovery and growth. Point of view is controlled so that the reader lives through the experience with the boy and follows his thoughts as he tries to come to an understanding of his problem, producing a very successful, sympathetic character.

There is another large group of prose in which Iskander is present as a student or an adult.[4] At times he only performs the duties of narrator, as in a number of chapters from Sandro iz Čegema. In still other chapters Iskander offers alternate interpretations to Sandro's explanation of events. More frequently he is an active participant in the action, one example being Sozvezdie kozlotura. Whether Iskander is narrator or active participant, one of his major functions is as commentator on what is happening in the world around him. Iskander attempts to present an objective, somewhat detached opinion on matters, even when describing the campaign to promote the kozlotur and Iskander's subsequent problems at work. Events call forth an honest, emotional response from him when they directly concern him, particularly on matters dealing with honesty and his native Abkhazia.

Iskander's reactions and reminisences offer an alternate view to the aspects of contemporary life. This is most always done with a touch of humor, sometimes presenting a scene from a new perspective. Here Iskander is the unnamed narrator or takes the name Sergej[5] or Zenon.[6]

These works reinforce the traits evident in the stories of Iskander's childhood. Iskander continues to maintain a highly developed sense of right and wrong, values honesty and friendship, and is curious, analyzing his relationships and the world around him. In Svjatoe ozero, Iskander does not believe the Svanian tale told by the shepherds about the lake being enchanted so he goes off to prove them wrong. In Letnim dnem and Angličanin s ženoj i rebenkom, Iskander meets foreigners and matches his preconceptions with reality.

In the stories of his youth Iskander is a student in Moscow. Although he is pulled to the city life, there are still strong ties to life in Abkhazia. When Iskander returns to Abkhazia for vacations and once again experiences the beauty of nature, it calls for an emotional response which acknowledges the value of this life close to nature and is concerned about the need to preserve this way of life. This feeling is reinforced in the works describing Iskander's adult life. Part of the pull towards life in Abkhazia is the close ties with his family.

In the group of works about his adult years, Iskander is a writer. In Sozvezdie Kozlotura and Sandro iz Čegema, he is a writer for the paper Red Subtropics. In a number of other works, Iskander is a writer from Moscow.[7] Sometimes he is described as being married and having a daughter. In the works of Sergej, he is a writer from Moscow but his field is history, not literature.

Iskander portrays himself as a soft touch. He cannot refuse people who want to borrow money from him. In the Posramlenie fal'šivomonetčikov, he reveals that his defense against them, learned in childhood, is to pretend to be duped and to go along with them. Then he does whatever he wants to, later saying he forgot all about everything. At the same time, Iskander does not use his position to pull strings. He cannot help Uncle Sandro get gold teeth for Aunt Katja in Sandro iz Čegema nor does he use it to get a room at a hotel that is "full." Others pull it off as he ineptly stands in the background.

Iskander's adult portrait is also three-dimensional. He is presented as a complex, honest, feeling man. Throughout these works, he tries to maintain a reasonable, objective point of view. He has his doubts about the way things are handled at the Red Subtropics and at the dentist's office. Yet the doubts are presented in a gentle, humorous fashion which is disarming and diffuses the criticism. A portion of the humor is directed at

himself and his failings. Thus this slightly bumbling character manages to gain the reader's sympathy.

Iskander's family plays a prominent part in his prose. However, there is little physical description of family members. They function as background or intermediate characters, interacting with Iskander to examine family relationships. Their portraits are more faceless pictures of a "mother," a "father," a "sister," and a "brother." Iskander's mother is present in fifteen works.[8] Her first appearance is in the Zapretnyj plod. Along with the other members of Iskander's family she remains nameless. In Zapretnyj plod, we learn that she is the mother of three children: two sons and one daughter. Iskander is the youngest child. The first mention of his mother is that she, together with her good friend Aunt Sonja, sat for an entire month next to his bed nursing Iskander back to health. Iskander reemphasizes her patience and constant care in Morskoj skorpion.

> Она давала ему лекарство, а чаще просто клала ему на лоб мокрое полотенце и сидела возле него, помахивая чем-нибудь, освежающим воздух, и на лице ее было выражение великого терпения, силой своей безусловно превосходящего его болезнь, и он это чувствовал, и от этого ему становилось легче.[9]

Iskander mentions in passing that his mother worked in a hospital in Sukhumi.

The brighter side of his mother's image is only briefly glimpsed in two works. Usually Iskander draws his mother's portrait as a picture of a woman who is trying hard to maintain a home and to do the best for her children, a difficult task during the war. Frequently she did this on her own, since Iskander's father is absent from most works. If the bombing came too close to town, the family would be sent off to the country, where they were divided up among relatives with their mother staying somewhere in between. Her main concerns were the safety of her three children, their education, and obtaining food during a time of shortages.

Iskander's aunt lived upstairs and watched him while his mother worked. While this helped his mother out, enabling her to work, it also complicated matters. Since Iskander's aunt was an opinionated, domineering woman, this led to a struggle with Iskander's mother for control. But his aunt ruled over everyone. Iskander was left in the middle, torn between the two centers of his life.

> Здесь, внизу, у мамы, -- суховатая необходимость, долг. Там -- сладость излишка, страсть. Моя детская душа трепещет и бьется между этими двумя полюсами, еще не ведая, что они полюса. Мать -- долг. Тетушка -- страсть.[10]

Iskander gives some information of his mother's family background and childhood in Slovo. His mother is one of ten children in the family. By implication Kjazym, Isa,

Maxaz, and Sandro are her brothers. One of her sisters is Ajsa. Iskander is not explicit in delineating his family tree. Only the sister Ajsa is mentioned by name in the story. It is only because their father is the same person described in other stories, that one is able to piece together the jigsaw puzzle of the family relationships. Her father was a stern man. The girls all worked hard. Iskander states that this was good for his mother's character development for it carried her through much that could have broken her.

Iskander also touches on his relationship with his mother when he is an adult. In the story Moja milicija menja berežet, Iskander has already had a book published and is about to go to Moscow. His mother, as always, tries to keep him from going. He needs a new coat and might catch cold before getting one. She still treats Iskander like a child. She wants to sew, or at the very least pin, letters of credit into his pocket. She doesn't think he is well known enough as a writer to be able to buy a coat without the letters. This minute portrait of his mother is drawn lovingly but with a sense of humor.

Utraty contains the final mention of his mother. In an emotional story, Iskander writes that his mother, brother and sister all passed away in the same year. He deeply regrets that there is nothing he can do to show his love for them.

Iskander's father plays an active role only in Zapretnyj plod. He is mentioned briefly in six other works.[11] As with the other close members of Iskander's family, his father remains nameless.

In Zapretnyj plod, his portrait is a mixture. He appears as both a loving father and angry man troubled by events at work. He returns home from work late, gloomy, and preoccupied. He becomes angry because Iskander's mother had the rest of the family wait for dinner until he got home. Then during dinner Iskander's brother tries to get his sister to eat the onions from his soup. His father gives him such a look that the spoon stops in mid air and returns. After dinner, however, he cheers up. He has managed to get ahold of nine new notebooks and distributes them evenly among his three children. Seeing that Iskander is upset, he tries to quiet him, promising to take Iskander fishing in the mountain rivers.

His mood swings abruptly when Iskander tattles on his sister for breaking the Moslem law by eating pork. His father becomes extremely angry. His eyes are particularly expressive. In a rage, he grabs Iskander and throws him to the floor. "Sukin syn!--kriknul otec.--Eščе predatelej mne v dome ne xvatalo!"[12] With an expression of disgust and hatred, he leaves the room, slamming the door. Iskander was in shock because he loved his father very much and this was the first time his father punished him.

The remaining references to Iskander's father are very short. Yet they help the reader get a feel for the type of man he is. In Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok, Iskander's mother compares Iskander with his father: "Ty, kak tvoj otec, budes' starat'sja dlja drugix."[13] Then in Sandro iz Čegema, it is mentioned that his father took Alixan and his wife into their courtyard after Alixan closed down his shop. These incidents help form a portrait of a man who cares about others and tries to help them. The fact that Iskander's father is a good family man is strengthened in the story Bogatyj portnoj i drugie.

The reader is left wondering about the fate of Iskander's father. Since his mother's face takes on a sad expression when she speaks about his father, it is evident that some misfortune befell him. Yet there is no mention of why she should look so sad when talking about him. With so few references to him, one wonders whether something happened to Iskander's father due the trouble at work, the war, or the purges. One indirect statement regarding this matter is found in Sandro iz Čegema. Maxaz states that his sister married a man from Sukhumi who was later arrested during the purges.

Of his immediate family, Iskander's older sister appears in his works the fewest times.[14] She is in five stories, and in three of these she is only mentioned briefly. These emphasize that there was the usual

relationship among the three children. The first story is Zaptretnyj plod. Here his sister is an active participant. When eating at a neighbor's, she breaks the Moslem custom and eats pork. Since Iskander is also present, his sister is afraid that he will tell at home. From this point on she is in a duel of wits with her brother to see who will get the upper hand in the situation. In these stories concerning their childhood, the relationship between them is portrayed as a typical brother/sister relationship, with sibling rivalry and teasing.

In later stories, she receives only brief mention. These examples serve to emphasize the age and sex differences. In Kolčerukij when the family leaves the city during the bombings, his sister is able to get a job at the local collective farm as a time-keeper. In Vremja po časam, Iskander mentions how his sister and her friends listen to romantic stories written by her friend Liza.

Utraty describes the untimely death of the sister of a man named Zenon. It can be assumed that this is about Iskander and his sister. He obviously loved his sister deeply and felt a great emptiness when she died from multiple schlerosis. In this work her portrait is drawn with love tinged with sadness.

In contrast to the portraits of his parents and sister, the character of Iskander's older brother is drawn

with considerable humor.[15] In addition to adding comic relief, he appears to be Iskander's foil, for they are opposites in temperament and behavior. While Iskander did well in school, his brother is constantly in trouble there. His teacher came to Iskander's house at least once a week to complain about his behavior and poor grades. In Zapretnyj plod, their sister tells how he jumped out the window once to avoid his teacher. His reputation causes a problem when their mother tries to enroll Iskander in school, as described in Moj pervyj škol'nyj den'. Iskander is held up as a good example to his brother; although in Dolgi i strasti (1973), his brother gets the last laugh since Iskander's grades aren't as good as their aunt thought they were.

His brother's actions aren't any better at home than they are at school. In Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok, Iskander tells how his brother refused to go to the nearest store for wine. He knew that no one would punish him that night and that by the next day, he would do some trick and be punished anyway. He is suspected of stealing his aunt's cigarettes in Nočnye tajny. Iskander tells us in the story Vremja po časam, how his brother as a joke wrote "i nogami, tolsten'kimi, kak bil'jardnye nožki"[16] at the end of a story by a friend of their sister, where she is describing the boy she loves. He would frequently tease his crazy Uncle Kolja as well. Nor were his

companions the best either. In Vozmezdie, it is mentioned that he frequently talked to the hooligan Kerpocik after soccer games.

Even when he was older, he did not seem to change. In Večernjaja doroga, during the bombing when the rest of the family goes off to the country, Iskander's brother remained in the village nearest town as one already polluted by urban civilization. He was recruited into the army. He sent word back to his family that he had been wounded and had been put in a hospital in Baku. In reality, he was homesick and wanted to see his mother before he went off to the front.

Zapretnyj plod contains a composite picture of Iskander's brother. In school teachers describe him as a "bujnyj lobotrjas", whose temperament took the form of a "xuliganistyj čertik". From the fourth year on, he dreams of becoming a chauffeur. Every scrap of paper becomes an application to the Director of Transport. Yet when he finally obtains a position as chauffeur, he soon loses it due to speeding.

Iskander's final mention of his brother occurs in Utraty. This story is more serious and emotional than previous works, illuminating another aspect of the relationship between the two brothers. His brother dies in the same year as his mother and sister, greatly

saddening Iskander. Obviously there were strong ties with his family.

In addition to his immediate family, a number of other relatives, along with his neighbors, appear in Iskander's works. This nucleus is chosen as much for their unique personalities as for the analysis of various aspects of the relationships among family members. Since people are defined in terms of their relationships with others, this is the area Iskander explores. The characters develop, not along a linear road, but at the cross-roads where their lives intersect. Each relative or neighbor is present in several works as a minor, background character. Then in a particular work, the relative becomes the focus of closer scrutiny. Thus even though many characters appear in small bits and pieces, the cumulative effect is that of a round portrait.

There are several common traits found in these characters. Although a number of them are illiterate, they possess cunning and innate wisdom which helps them make their way through life with strength and dignity. This is usually coupled with an inner strength, a sense of self-worth.

One important relative in Iskander's prose is his grandfather. Iskander creates a vivid picture of his grandfather[17]; and through the story of his past life the reader also glimpses a small picture of the history and

customs of Abkhazia. When describing his grandfather, Iskander's tone is serious. The reader can feel the author's respect for his grandfather, who is introduced in Slovo.

Iskander creates a masterful portrait of a man with great inner strength, who has worked hard all of his life. Twice he resettled in Turkey, each time returning to Abkhazia to start all over again from nothing. His dominant trait is his love of hard work, exemplified by his persistent chopping away at the blackberry branches. Physically he is small but quite strong. His face typically is stern, almost fierce looking, probably due to the constant hard work. Iskander also describes his feet. They are not the feet of a person from the city, but rather like those of peasants, or more particularly of Biblical characters such as the apostles or prophets:

> Я смотрю на крупные ступни дедушкиных ног, на их какое-то особое, отчетливое строение. На каждой ноге следующий за большим пальцем крупнее большого и как бы налезает на него. Я знаю, что такие ступни никогда не бывают у городских людей, только потому-то у деревенских. Гораздо позже точно такие же ноги я замечал на старинных картинах с библейским сюжетом -- крестьянские ноги апостолов и пророков.[18]

His grandfather is described as being brave as well. In Iz rasskazov o Čike, he does not hesitate to go up against the much bigger Kaban, the top bully in Čik's

neighborhood. Čik's grandfather cuts Kaban down to size quite handily.

Others seem to resent his strength of character. They seem to wait for some small failure on his part, as Iskander does in Dedušᵏa when they are out chopping branches. It is as if a failure on his grandfather's part now and then would make it easier to live with him.

Even though he is quite critical of others and expects them to do their share of the work, Iskander's grandfather has a more gentle side to him. In Dedušᵏa, he takes the time to collect bilberries for everyone at home, to show Iskander bear tracks, and to tell Iskander stories about his past. Here, as in Lošadʹ djadi Kjazyma, his grandfather talks to Iskander as an equal, taking time to explain things to him, such as what had happened to Kjazym's horse Kukla. Iskander's love for his grandfather comes through the picture of a stern man, who has worked hard all of his life.

Another relative who is quite prominent in Iskander's works is his uncle Kolja, referred to as "my crazy uncle." This successful portrait is drawn with considerable humor and sympathy. He appears in eleven works.[19]

In Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil, Iskander focuses primarily on his Uncle Kolja. Uncle Kolja has a certificate signed by a famous psychiatrist verifying that he is crazy and permitting him to live at home. When

children start boasting of their famous relatives who are fliers, etc., Iskander has his trump card--a crazy uncle. The fact that he has a certificate to prove it makes it even better.

Uncle Kolja has a limited vocabulary consisting of about 80 words, mostly Aabkhazian; but he swears in Russian and Turkic. Uncle Kolja is quite strong and would cheerfully do work such as bringing water, chopping wood, or carrying bags to and from the bazaar. Normally, he is quite harmless. He would sit on the bench in the courtyard singing songs he makes up.

A number of unusual habits make Kolja the object of much attention and teasing. He is quite fastidious about cleanliness, washing his hands every fifteen minutes or so. This is especially true after shaking hands with someone. One thing Čik does to irritate his uncle is to blow in his uncle's direction. Uncle Kolja would cover his cup of tea with a saucer to prevent germs from getting into the tea. In addition to his cleanliness fetish, Uncle Kolja has a number of other strange behavior patterns. He hates cats, dogs, children and drunks; loves sweets, in particular syrup water and lemonade. To calm him down, his aunt sends Čik off with his uncle to buy him lemonade. Finally, Uncle Kolja is passionately in love with Aunt Faina, who lives in the shanty in the courtyard. She is already married and does not return his love, which

is inexplicable in light of his passion for cleanliness. Aunt Faina is coarse, untidy, and dirty. Uncle Kolja is satisfied to watch her work in her kitchen. He stands behind one wall, out of view of his mother and sister, and spies through the cracks. If he is caught, he shrugs his shoulders as if to say: "It is bigger than me." He is only able to stay away for an hour or two. This love continues until the day he dies.

Although Iskander portrays the relationship with his crazy uncle in a humorous manner, Uncle Kolja's portrait is also drawn with sympathy and compassion. On numerous occasions, Iskander writes that he feels sorry for his uncle when people tease him. In the story Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil, Iskander notices an expression of suffering and shame in his uncle's eyes when people laugh about his great love for Aunt Faina. Iskander's closing sentences of that story sum up his feelings for his Uncle Kolja.

> Нет, все-таки жизнь и его не обделила счастливыми минутами. Ведь он пел, и пение его было простым и радостным, как пение птиц.[20]

Iskander's grandmother[21] lived upstairs with his aunt and crazy Uncle Kolja. She is Kolja's mother. In the story Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil, Iskander describes her as a strong person obviously devoted to her son. She will not allow Kolja to be put into a home. If Uncle

Kolja was causing problems, she would get him quickly under control by grabbing him by the collar and sticking his head under the faucet. If she thought he was being over-worked, she would give him the sign to not follow Iskander's aunt's orders.

His grandmother could be a cantankerous woman, for if she became mad at one neighbor, she would not split the harvest with the rest of the neighbors. In addition she was an opinionated person and spoke up when she had a mind to, interfering in the lives of her family whenever she felt it was necessary for their welfare.

Iskander composes a picture of a healthy, strong-willed woman from a rural upbringing. Frequently she smokes cigars and sits peacefully in the garden, next to the stove, or on the landing observing life. His grandmother's portrait is drawn with a touch of humor along with love and compassion.

Among the relatives who live upstairs is Iskander's aunt. She also remains nameless. In the eleven works she appears in, Iskander portrays her as a strong person who greatly influenced his life.[22]

She is mentioned first in Detskij sad and more fully described described in Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil. She lives upstairs from Iskander along with her husband, Iskander's grandmother, and Uncle Kolja. She loves to embellish reality, saying that Uncle Kolja was

"dusevnobol'noj" rather than crazy. She also prefers the story that Kolja fell off an Arabian jumper to the version that he became seriously ill during childhood. She keeps Uncle Kolja's papers in her "Singer" sewing machine. If a commission showed up to investigate why he was living at home, she would put a new holiday shirt on him and give him grandmother's knitting, saying that he lived with her like a count.

His aunt has an interesting and unusual background. She is multilingual, speaking Russian, Turkic, Georgian, Persian, and Abkhazian. She married a provincial Persian consular who once lived in town. They moved to Persia. She left him and returned to Abkhazia, later marrying an Abkhazian. She tells this story hundreds of times, as well as the story of how she met Prince Oldenburgskij and how he fell in love with her beauty.

Iskander spent much time upstairs at his aunt's. There was always a group of relatives gathered in his aunt's kitchen every night like at a club. Even during the daytime, neighbors visited his aunt. She took an active role in Iskander's upbringing. In Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju, Iskander is at his aunt's, trying to find an opportune time to ask his aunt if he can go to the sea. If his aunt gives permission, the other parents will allow their children to go too. His aunt, along with the Rich Tailor, was the main panicer if the children could not be

found. She was also avidly interested in Iskander's education, hoping that he would not turn out like his brother. This obsession with Iskander's education is a dominant trait which appears in several works.

His aunt "glavenstvovala" over the entire family and she usually got her way. Her strong domineering personlity carries over in her relations with the neighbors in the courtyard. She is habitually found sitting in a chair on the veranda ("kapitanskaja mostka") drinking tea and smoking cigarettes:

> В распахнутых окнах веранды второго этажа была видна тетушка Чика в своей классической позе со стаканом крепкого чая в руке и с папиросой, дымящейся в пепельнице. Она что-то оживленно рассказывала невидимой собеседнице, и Чик совершенно не исключал, что она хвастается его учебой.[23]

From this vantage point she can see all that goes on in the courtyard and frequently comments on and interferes in the activities below.

Iskander's aunt is theatrical. She would strike theatrical poses in discussions with Aunt Medeja. When she discovers what Iskander's grades really are, she has the look of a good woman trampled by her unfeeling relatives. She turns into an old woman sitting with her head propped up by her hand and shaking back and forth from old age, an image repeated in the story Mučeniki sceny. She would do this when she wanted to show that her

life had been wasted worrying about those near her. In such instances, she claims that her relatives (sometimes referred to as invalids) were a chain around her neck, robbing her of her youth. Yet when her friend Aunt Medeja arrives, she instantly changes into a flowering 35-year-old princess-swan.

One of the traits Iskander disliked the most was his aunt's duplicity. Frequently she would cool towards one of her friends without any apparent reason. She would create fights with the neighbors. It all depended on her mood. His aunt would create a scandal, throw her former friend out of the house, and not speak to her for months.

The picture of this interesting, eccentric woman is another successful portrait to be added to Iskander's family gallery. Iskander draws his aunt's image with bold strokes, depicting a strong personality, exhibiting many contradictory traits. He sums up his position with this quote about his aunt:

> Чик никогда в жизни не видел человека такого доброго и такого несправедливого одновременно: все зависело от настроения.[24]

One of Iskander's childhood neighbors is Suren, nicknamed the Rich Tailor. He is first portrayed in the annecdote Portnoj i fininspektor (1969), which was incorporated into the short story Bogatyj portnoj i

drugie. The Rich Tailor also appears in nine other works.[25]

Initially the Rich Tailor is shown as a tailor who works at home on the side. He gets a ticket for this. After this incident the Rich Tailor becomes cautious and checks out all strangers who walk down the street and cross-examines all new customers from his second story balcony. In Bogatjy portnoj i drugie, Iskander develops the Rich Tailor's personality more fully.

Humor and sarcasm are frequently used in drawing the Rich Tailor's portrait. His is the closest portrait to that of the New Soviet Man for he does not maintain any roots with the past. He is a tailor who has managed to better his position in society. He no longer lives in a shanty in the courtyard. As his income rose, he acquired one room on the second floor of the house, then a second and finally a third room. Since he could expand no more, he buys a plot and is able to build his own home on it. But this New Soviet Man has gone awry; he wants to be rich thus he works at home on the side. In addition he has a bad temper and flaunts his feeling of superiority at everyone. The absurd, petty aspects of his personality are emphasized and the reader has little sympathy for this comic character, who is less successfully protrayed than the other neighbors and relatives who people Iskander's works.

There are several traits and mannerisms that recur in subsequent stories that reinforce the Rich Tailor's personality. He spends much time on his balcony, often ironing, surveying the courtyard and street, frequently interfering in what is going on. There are many geraniums on the balcony and the Rich Tailor constantly stops to sniff them. As Čik mentions in Den' Čika, the Rich Tailor followed a set pattern in this matter and never changed his actions.

> Балкон как бы представлял из себя цветущий макет его будущей усадьбы. Здесь он обычно отдыхал, а чаще гладил, громко прыская водой на сукно.
>
> Бывало, наберет в рот воды, а потом почему-то передумает поливать, а то и не передумает, да в это время что-то срочно надо ответить кому-то на улице, чаще всего Алихану, так он, чтобы не пропадал вода фыркнет ею на цветок и потом уже начинает говорить. А то, бывало и поливать сукно не передумал, и вроде некому срочно отвечать, но так случайно, упадет взгляд на цветок, и вдруг Богатый Портной весь подбирается, настораживается, словно село на растение какое-то зловредное насекомое или он почувствовал, что, оказывается, оно умирает от жажды, и вот он быстро наклоняется и -- фырк! А потом еще и еще и, уже успокоившись, снова берется за утюг.

The Rich Tailor is also portrayed as being a man who feels superior to others in the neighborhood. Everything belonging to him is the best. His family is a model family. He points this out to his neighbors when he gets the chance, telling Alixan that Alixan's wife is not as good as his is. Upon returning from his plot, the Rich

Tailor tells everyone how much better the air, fruit, trees, and birds are on his plot. To enhance his status among the neighbors, the Rich Tailor is a name dropper, mentioning in Bogatyj portnoj i drugie how he sews for a "certain official."

The Rich Tailor has quite a temper. He frequently starts fights with Alixan or the palm-reader. In any argument he must have the last word or make it appear as if he is the one to end the argument. His pretentiousness is typified by the fact that while guarding the fruit trees on his plot, the Rich Tailor shot himself in the hip and developed a slight limp. IsKander notes in several stories that the Rich Tailor later started to hint that his limp was due to a war injury.

However, Iskander does round out the Rich Tailor's portrait somewhat. For all his bad points and extreme behavior, the Rich Tailor is a hard worker and proud father who provides well for his family. Yet even though this is true, his relations with his family are portrayed in an ironic manner. His daughter's piano playing is encouraged to disguise the sound of the sewing machine when he works illegally at home. The Rich Tailor embarasses his son at school by stopping by Onik's classroom and calling him a little dumpling in front of all his classmates.

Alixan is another of the neighbors from Iskander's courtyard. Like many of the other characters from Iskander's stories, Alixan has led an interesting life, which exemplifies a part of the history and color of Abkhazia. His life takes shape across the pages of nine stories.[27]

He is first mentioned in the story Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok. Here Alixan is described as the mildest and most peaceable of men because his job was selling honey-coated almonds. Alixan is described in more detail in the next story he appears in, Bogatyj portnoj i drugie. Iskander quickly fills in Alixan's background as well as giving a physical description. Alixan is married to Daša, whom he loves very much. They live in a shanty ("xibarkak") in the courtyard. Alixan used to own a coffee shop and confectionary. Now, however, he has a tray he fills with sweets or roasted chestnuts to sell at the market. When steamships arrive he sells them to the passengers on the dock. He is a proud man and still calls himself a "kommersant:" "Ja kommersantom rodilsja i kommersantom umru."[28]

Physically Alixan is a tall, thin, stoop-shouldered man. Throughout the story Bogatyj portnoj i drugie, Iskander associates Alixan with the phrase "kruglye brovi nad kruglymi glazami." This leit-motif is repeated again in the story Dolgi i strasti as well as in the Zaščita

Čika and Sandro iz Čegema. Iskander uses the epithets "mirnyj", "dobroželatel'nyj", "rovnyj", and "spokojnyj" to show what an even, peaceful temperament Alixan has. In the evenings after work, he would rest on a bench in the courtyard or on the street outside the Rich Tailor's door. He would sit and soak the corns on his feet in hot steaming water. Sometimes he would finger his beads as he soaked his feet. Then he would sit cross-legged with his feet on the opposite knees and blissfully scratch each foot with a spoon. This image is repeated again in Sandro iz Čegema and Zaščita Čika.

Frequently Alixan and the Rich Tailor would chat, or more often argue about something. Many evenings they played nards (an ancient game played with dice) and drank coffee. Alixan seems to be the foil or counter-weight to the Rich Tailor. On numerous occasions Alixan expresses the attitude that others should be left in peace to live as they want.

Iskander constructs the portrait of Alixan with feeling and sympathy which at times is mixed with a touch of humor. The final lines of the chapter Igroki from the novel Sandro iz Čegema sum up Iskander's feeling for this character:

> А бывало, вечерами дядя Алихан сидел на пороге своей комнатенки, парил мозоли в теплой воде, курил и напевал персидские песни. Помню стекленеющий взгяд каштанщика, мелодию, цепенящую сладкой горечью бессмысленности жизни, бесконечную, как караванный путь в никуда.

Аллах, исималах, рахмани до сур аллах! -- Блажен, кто блажен...[29]

The palmist is a frequent visitor to Iskander's courtyard. His colorful, flamboyant figure from Abkhazia's past comes to life on the pages of four works.[30] Iskander first describes the palm-reader in the story Bogatyj portnoj i drugie. He has a striking outward appearance to compliment his striking personality. His predominant features are his "firey" beard and hair which match his "firey" gaze. The palm-reader would ride into the courtyard on his donkey to tell fortunes, announcing his arrival by calling out: "Poslednyj russkij dvorjanin i pervyj sovetskij xiromant."[31] All of his activities are conducted while still seated on his donkey, even drinking coffee at one of the stalls and telling stories to other customers. In payment for services, the palmist takes money, produce, or clothing for his numerous brood, referred to as "volčata" or "Ryžij komand."

The palm-reader lived in a stalactite cave on the mountainside outside of town. His wife was almost a mother-hero due to the large number of red-haired children they had. They lived together in the cave with their donkey.

Iskander portrays the palm-reader as a conniver. He ran an illegal still at the back of his cave using stolen fruit. In season, the still worked almost round the clock

like a small war factory. During the bombings in World War II, the town used the palm-reader's cave as a bombshelter. He used this as an opportunity to sell his home brew to the men, while his children used the darkness and panic to steal things from the suitcases and pockets. Always on the watch for a quick way to make money, after the war the palmreader turned this cave into a tourist attraction for it had been the hide out of two downed German fliers. He gave tours of the cave showing the stalactite the Germans hung on to and the underground river. He also sold souvenirs including "cave-pearls," candles, and medicinal clay; plus he told fortunes. His children would steal the tourists' sandwiches and jars of milk if there weren't any strong men in the group.

Iskander presents the reader with a striking figure drawn with bold strokes. The palm-reader is a comic image somewhat larger than life. Yet Iskander gives him dignity and pride, saving him from becoming a mere caricature. The parallel drawn at the end of the story Vremja po Časam indicates how Iskander feels about the palm-reader.

> Огненнобородный хиромант, не слезая с ослика, пил кофе возле одного из столиков, и все ближайшие столики были обращены к нему, потому что рассказы его, похожие на пророчества, хотя и не сбывались никогда, иногда утешали.
>
> Казалось, древний пилигрим, достигший оазиса диоскурийской кофейни, сейчас расскажет последние вавилонские новости и двинется дальше на своем ослике, цокая честными копытами по кремнистым руслам исчезнувших царств и выбивая из них

единственное, чем они владели и владеют, --
скуднук пыль веков.[32]

Among the people in the village Ankara where one of his uncles lives, Iskander encounters Šaaban Labra, better known as Kolčerukij.[33] Kolčerukij is another strong-willed, bad tempered individual, who is also described in quite a humorous manner. This is an example of Iskander's mastery at characterization.

Initially he is mentioned in Večernjaja doroga in which we are told how Iskander fell into Kolčerukij's empty grave one night. A full length characterization follows in the story Kolčerukij where the initial portrayal shows Kolčerukij's sharp tongue, loud, irritating manner, and outrageous behavior. When Kolčerukij goes to the city for an operation, a prankster calls to say that he has died. When Kolčerukij returns home to his own funeral, instead of apologizing for the mixup, he demands to hear the mourners, refuses to return the funeral gifts (he pretends to have been sent home by the hospital to die), and yells at anyone who comes to see if he had died. Kolčerukij is constantly arguing with his wife and friend Mustafa. A strong rivalry over who is the better horseman had developed between the two friends, only to be settled after Kolčerukij's death. His sharp tongue becomes quite pointed in several chapters of the

novel Sandro iz Čegema published outside the Soviet Union. The comments are definitely anti-Stalin.

Kolčerukij's dominant feature is his left arm which was withered, the result of being shot by a Prince he had insulted.

There are several examples of Kolčerukij's outrageous behavior in the story. Kolčerukij would imitate the rooster's crow while out working in the fields. This would get all the roosters in the area crowing. Kolčerukij was quite proud of this ability. Although he was a hard worker and worked on the kolkhoz farm, Kolčerukij would put his arm in a red sling and walk around that way for days if the government was enlisting workers. He would hint that his injury was caused by a Menshevik bullet.

Despite his sharp tongue and comic figure, Iskander rounds out Kolčerukij's personality, showing him to be a kind-hearted man as well. He would stop unasked and give Iskander's family corn flour, telling them not to tell his wife about it. In Remzik, his kindness is reinforced. When his grandson Remzik comes back to the village, Kolčerukij welcomes him home unquestioningly and takes Remzik along with him to the river to water and bathe his new horse. Kolčerukij even lets Remzik ride the horse.

During his childhood, Iskander frequently stayed at his uncle Kjazym's house in the country. His mother would

send him to the county when the fighting got close to Suxumi. Kjazym[34] is first described in the Lošad' djadi Kjazyma. Here Kjazym is described as a strong, tall, stately man with a severe look on his face. He is a good provider, whose one passion in life was his extraordinary jumper, Kukla.

Kjazym's character is developed to a much greater extent in later works. He is one of ten brothers and two sisters, among them Sandro. Kjazym is a hard worker, attending to the many tasks on his land: hoeing, bee-keeping, and tending the animals. Along with the shepherd Kunta, Kjazym also puts up the roof on the new kolkhoz tobacco silo. Kjazym is no longer presented as being severe. He is kind, laughing, and loves to tell tales, frequently about the shepherd Kunta.

Iskander values cunning quite highly for it is a trait evident in many of his characters: himself as a boy, Čik, the Rich Tailor, Kjazym and Sandro. Kjazym is a brigade leader. In Derevo detstva, he must use his innate intelligence (for he is illiterate) to outwit the shepherd Kunta as well as the people who want to see Kunta arrested. Kjazym tricks Kunta into revealing where he hid the tobacco he stole. Again in the short story Brigadir Kjazym, Kjazym is called in by the president of the kolkhoz to solve the theft of money from the kolkhoz safe.

Once more Kjazym tricks Tyjmyr into revealing where he hid the money.

Kjazym's portrait is not drawn in the humorous manner of Uncle Kolja's or Kolčerukij's. It is much closer to the portrait of Iskander's grandfather. It is a balanced picture of a hard working man, possessing a sharp mind and self-respect. Kjazym was always himself with any group of people. At the end of Derevo detstva, Iskander explains how he loved his uncle for these traits.

Another major figure is Sandro.[35] Sandro is not only the main character in the novel Sandro iz Čegema, but he also appears in: Derevo detstva, Umykanie (1979), and Bol'šoj den' bol'šogo doma. Numerous excerpts and entire chapters from the novel have been published separately.

When Sandro iz Čegema opens, Sandro is eighty years old, yet still tall, strong, and handsome. He is broadchested, with narrow hips. Sandro has a cheerful, polite dispostion. His portrait is not presented in chronological order. The portrayal jumps from describing Sandro at eighty to tales of his youth and back again.

Sandro is in constant demand as a tamada, i.e. a toastmaster at weddings, funeral feasts, or other special occasions. He takes this responsibility seriously, being proud of his huge capacity to drink without feeling the effects. Complimenting his position as tamada, Sandro is an excellent storyteller. He loves to tell of his past

adventures and is usually surrounded by delighted listeners. In Bol'ʏoj den' bol'ʏogo doma, four tales are interspersed throughout the body of the story. The stories are an interesting blend of realistic detail and the absurd, making it difficult to determine where the truth ends and fantasy begins.

Sandro is cunning. On many occasions, he uses his shrewdness to turn a bad situation to his advantage. In Umykanie, Sandro manages to be the one to marry his friend's bride in a hilarious turn of events.

In contrast with his father and brothers, Sandro has no love of hard work. While his father and brothers go off to hoe the fields, Sandro can be found at home entertaining guests. He never worked for the kolkhoz. His talant as a dancer secured him a position as a member of the Abkhazina song and dance troupe until the beginning of the purges. Here once again his cunning serves him well. He feigns an injury and leaves the troupe avoiding arrest. Sandro felt that being a tamada was his life's work. He maintained this position even in the city. In describing the events of Sandro's life, Iskander is able to present a wide range of Abkhazian customs, making Sandro the tamada of Abkhazia.

All of Iskander's main characters are people whose roots are firmly planted in Abkhazia. There are few people from Moscow or elsewhere outside Abkhazia in

Iskander's prose. And in most of these cases, Iskander's works come back to focus on life in Abkhazia. These characters and Iskander himself are judged according to the standards of behavior learned in Abkhazia. The characters are simple people, whose portraits are sometimes serious, sometimes humorous. Yet they are always drawn with sympathy and love. Even though several of them are drawn with exaggerated proportions (such as Kolčerukij, Iskander's aunt, the palmist, and the Rich Tailor), they do not become mere caricatures and are able to maintain their dignity and humanity.

Cunning and innate wisdom are two traits Iskander values highly, qualities present in Iskander himself, Čik, Iskander's grandfather, Kjazym, and Sandro. An inner sense of worth enables these characters to make their way through life with dignity:

> Я любил этого человека и с детства восхищался им, не особенно понимая природу своего восхищения. Я его видел у себя в деревне, в родной ему среде, видел в городе среди чужих людей, и везде он был самим собой -- ни перед кем не заискивающий, всегда доброжелательно-насмешливый. Сейчас, пытаясь найти слова, чтобы обозначить его сущность, я могу сказать, что в нем чувствовалась необычайная духовная значительность.[36]

A character's language and gestures help to individualize him. However, no character is developed in isolation. All are shown through their interactions with one another. In Iskander's prose, the same characters

recur in a multitude of works, so that he is able to show his characters in a wide variety of situations and relationships. In addition to the major characters described, there are many others who occur in Iskander's prose more than once. They include Iskander's childhood friends Onik, Lesik, Son'ka, Nika, and Remzik; the shepherd Kunta and his brother Omar; Aunt Medeja; the school guard starik Gabunija; the hunter Tendel; Sandro's wife Katja; Vaxtang; and Kjazym's wife Nuca. Iskander produces rich characterization by enmeshing his friends and relatives in an extended network of human relationships. While a part of a caring family, each person preserves his own unique personality and interesting history. It is through interaction with the other characters that Iskander/Čik achieves realtiy.

The panorama of the lives of these characters enables Iskander to show the society of Abkhazia in action. The complicated network of individual lives forms a fascinating composite picture of life in Abkhazia from the turn of the century to the present day.

Notes

[1]Fazil' Iskander, Sandro iz Čegema (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979), p. 7-8.

[2]Iskander describes his own childhood in the following twenty three works, the initial description occuring in Iskander's first prose work Pervoe delo (1956); Rasskaz o more (1962); Petux (1962); Detskij sad (1963); Zapretnyj plod (1963); Večernjaja doroga (1964); Trinadcatyj podvig Gerakla (1964); Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil (1964);

Urok igry v šaxmaty (1964); Posramlenie fal'šivomonetčikov (1965); Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok (1966); Kolčerukij (1968); Deduška (1968); Ne vse tak prosto (1968); Pis'mo (1968); Pod sen'ju evkaliptov (1969); Bogatyj portnoj i drugie (1970); Put' iz Varjag v Greki (1971); Mučeniki sceny (1972); Pervyj raz v pervyj klass (1973); Dolgi i strasti (1973); Vremja po časam (1973); and Derevo detstva (1977).

[3]These works are: Den' Čika (1971); Nočnye tajny (1972); Remzik (1974); Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju (1975); Iz rasskazov o Čike (1977); Vozmezdie (1977); and Zaščita Čika (1978).

[4]Dolžniki (1964); Svjatoe ozero (1964); Urok igry v šaxmaty (1964); Posramlenie fal'šivomonetčikov (1965); Sovezdie kozlotura (1966); Angličanin s ženoj i rebenkom (1967); Kak my putešestvovali (1967); Ne vse tak prosto (1968); Letnym dnem (1969); Lov foreli v verxovjax Kodora (1969); Pod sen'ju evkaliptov (1969); Vstreča (1969); Moja milicija menja berežet (1970); Slučaj po doroge (1971); Put' iz varjag v greki (1971); Sandro iz Čegema (1973); Derevo detstva (1977); V strane čudes (1977); and Serdce (1981).

[5]Sergej appears in the following works: Zaira (1974); Prikosnovenie (1975); Morskoj skorpion (1976); Bol' i nežnost' (1977); and V strane čudes (1977).

[6]Zenon is the main character in one work, Utraty (1982).

[7]These are the later chapters of Sandro iz Čegema (1973): Pod sen'ju evkaliptov (1969); Vstreča (1969); Moja milicija menja berežet (1970); Zaira (1974); and Morskoj skorpion (1976).

[8]Iskander's mother appears in these works: Detskij sad (1963); Zapretnyj plod (1963); Vecernjaja doroga (1964); Slovo (1965); Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok (1966); Kolčerukij (1968); Moja milicija menja berezet (1970); Den' Čika (1971); Poslednyj xiromant (1972); Moj pervyj škol'nyj den' (1973); Dolgi i strasti (1973); Morskoj skorpion (1976); Derevo detstva (1977); Zaščita Čika (1978); and Utraty (1983).

[9]F. Iskander, Morskoj skorpion in Pod sen'ju greckogo orexa (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel'," 1979), pp. 208-9.

[10]F. Iskander, Dolgi i strasti in his Vremja sčastlivix naxodok (Moscow: "Molodaja gvardija," 1973), p. 75.

[11] Iskander's father appears in the following works: Zapretnyj plod (1963); Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok (1966); Bogatyj portnoj i drugie (1970), Pervyj den' v pervyj klass (1973); Sandro iz Čegema (1973); Vremja po časam (1973); and Zaščita Čika (1978).

[12] F. Iskander, Zapretnyj plod, in Pervoe delo (Moscow: "Detskaja literatura," 1978), p. 45.

[13] Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok, p. 13.

[14] She appears in the following works: Zapretnyj plod (1963); Večernjaja doroga (1964); Vremja po časam (1973); Kolčerukij (1968); and Utraty (1983).

[15] He is present in these works: Zaprtenyj plod (1963); Večernjaja doroga (1964); Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok (1966); Bogatyj portnoj i drugie (1970); Nočnye tajny (1972); Dolgi i strasti (1973); Vremja po časam (1973); Moj pervyj škol'nyj den' (1973); Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju (1975); Vozmezdie (1977); Zaščita Čika (1978); and Utraty (1983).

[16] Vremja po časam, p. 105.

[17] His grandfather appears in the following works: Slovo (1965); Lošad' djadi Kjazyma (1966); Sozvezdie kozlotura (1966); Deduška (1968); and Iz rasskazov o Čike (1977).

[18] Iskander, Deduška, Novyj mir, XLIV, No. 7 (1968), 68.

[19] His uncle is present in these works: Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil (1964); Bogatyj portnoj i drugie (1970); Den' Čika (1971); Put' iz varjag v greki (1971); Nočnye tajny (1972); Mučeniki sceny (1973); Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju (1975); Iz rasskazov o Čike (1977); and Zaščita Čika (1978).

[20] Iskander, Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil, in his Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok (Moscow: "Molodaja gvardija," 1973), p. 41.

[21] His grandmother is in these works: Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil (1964); Den' Čika (1971). Nočnye tajny (1972); Dolgi i strasti (1973); Moj pervyj školnyj den' (1973); Vremja po časam (1973); and Zaščita Čika (1978).

[22] Iskander's aunt appears in these works: Detskij sad (1963); Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil (1964); Bogatyj portnoj i drugie (1970); Den' Čika (1971);

Mučeniki sceny (1972); Dolgi i strasti (1973); Vremja po časam (1973); Caepitie i ljubov' k morju (1975); Iz rasskazov o Čike (1977); Zaščita Čika (1978); and Na našej ulice (1981).

[23]F. Iskander, Zaščita Čika in his Zaščita Čika (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel'," 1983), p. 81.

[24]F. Iskander, Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju, JUnost', No. 6 (1975), p. 28.

[25]The Rich Tailor appears in the following works: Portnoj i fininspektor (1969); Poslednyj xiromant (1969); Bogatyj portnoj i drugie (1970); Nocnye tajny (1972); Den' Čika (1973); Vremja po časam (1973); Iz rasskazov o Čike (1977); Zaščita Čika (1978); and Na našej ulice (1981).

[26]F. Iskander, Bogatyj portnoj i drugie, Novyj mir, No. 6 (1970) p. 10.

[27]Alixan is present in these works: Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok (1966); Bogatyj portnoj i drugie (1970); Den' Čika (1971); Poslednyj xiromant (1972); Dolgi i strasti (1973); Vremja po časam (1973); Sandro iz Čegema (1973); Vozmezdie (1977); and Zaščita Čika (1978).

[28]Bogatyj portnoj i drugie, p. 24.

[29]F. Iskander, Sandro iz Čegema, in his Sandro iz Čegema (Moscow: "Sovetskoj pisatel'," 1977), pp. 312-313. The final works are changed in the version published by Ardis. They read: "Bixmilax iraxmani iraxim! -- blažen kto blažen." Sandro iz Čegema (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979), p. 85.

[30]The Palmist is in the following works: Bogatyj portnoj i drugie (1970); Den' Čika (1971); Poslednyj xiromant (1972); and Vremja po časam (1973).

[31]Bogatyj portnoj i drugie, p. 14.

[32]F. Iskander, Vremja po časamj in his Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok (Moscow: "Molodaja gvarjia," 1973), p. 114.

[33]Kolčerukij appears in the following works: Večernjaja doroga (1964); Kolčerukij (1968); and Sandro iz Čegema (Ardis, 1979).

[34]Kjazym is in these works: Lošad' djadi Kjazyma (1966); Deduška (1968); Put' iz varjag v greki (1971); Derevo detstva (1977); Brigadir Kjazym (1981); and Bol'šij

den' bol'šogo doma (1982).

[35]Sandro appears in the following works: Slučaj po doroge (1970); Sandro iz Čegema (1973); Derevo detstva (1977); Umykanie (1979); and Bol'šoj den' bol'šogo doma (1981).

[36]F. Iskander, Derevo detstva, in his Sandro iz Čegema (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979), p. 599.

Chapter Three: Poetics

Iskander's prose has a number of different genres--the short story, the povest', and the novel. To each work he brings a wide range of poetic devices. And in a number of works he experiments with new styles and new techniques.

Iskander is a careful craftsman, who comes to prose by way of poetry. His descriptions are saturated with imagery from the most varied sources used to evoke a mood and to characterize the many people in his prose. This complex web of images found in epithets, symbols, similes, and metaphors adds artistic depth to Iskander's works. Personification, oxymoron, ostranenie, plus folk-lore, biblical, and Greco-Roman motifs are additional devices used to enrich many works.

His prose is structurally complex. In constructing his works, Iskander pays careful attention to control of narrative voice and point of view. Digressions, foreshadowing, personification, and satiric devices are commonly used.

Language

Not only does his prose encompass many styles, but its language is rich and varied. The varied texture is evident in the wide range of styles, often masterfully combined in a single work. One finds lyrical descriptive passages together with humorous passages, bureaucratic and

journalistic jargon, slang, and dialogues which often incorporate Turkic or Abkhazian words.

Lyrical passages are used to set the scene and the emotional tone of the work. Deduška, for example, begins with a vivid description of the hillside where Iskander and his grandfather are working.

> Мы с дедушкой на лесистом гребне горы. Жаркий летний день, но здесь тенисто, прохладно. Земля покрыта толстым, слабо пружинящим слоем прошлегодней листвы. Тут и там разбросаны сморщенные ежики кожуры буковых орешков. Обычно они пустые, но иногда попадаются и с орешками. Вокруг, куда ни посмотришь, мощные серебряные стволы буков, редкие кряжистые каштаны.
>
> В просвете между деревьями, в дальней глубине, -- голубой призрак колхидской долины, огражденной стеной моря, вернее куском стены, потому что все остальное прикрывает лес.[1]

This passage underscores Iskander's deep ties with nature. Such descriptions, found in almost every other work, are rich in details and images.

These landscape scenes are realistically presented, giving the names of the trees, bushes, flowers, birds, and fish. The colors, sounds, smells, and textures are vividly rendered. As Iskander describes the forest sounds, the prose takes on a musical quality: "slyšal čem-to volnujuščij šelest zelenyx veršin."[2] The epithets chosen to describe the forest, sea, and river also convey a sense of peace and serenity as a part of nature. The forest is cool and inviting. It is by the sea or in the woods that Iskander feels refreshed and at peace.

In Sozvezdie kozlotura lyrical segments are contrasted with portions where journalistic language predominates. These reminiscences again are linked with Iskander's ties with nature and his grandfather's home in the Abkhazian countryside. The tone is serene, with a sense of belonging, and the language becomes fresh, original, and expressive. Such descriptions of nature abound in lyrical undercurrents and underscore the narrator's feelings. They establish a peaceful, calm mood as the emotional tone of the work.

Bureaucratic and journalistic jargon and clichés prevail in those sections of Sozvezdie Kozlotura concerning the goatibex. The speech of Vaxtang Bočua, Platon Samsonovic, and Avtandil Avtandilovic is laden with empty slogans and phrases, such as, "Vy napisali vrednuju dlja nas stat'ju."[3], or "Sejčas lučše, čtoby eta ideja šla snizu, eto ix podstegnet...."[4] Similar examples occur in the speech of bureaucrats in Sandro iz Čegema and Kolčerukij. In Kolčerukij Iskander parodies the elaborate phraseology of official documents. Kolčerukij, together with kolkhoz officials and relatives, drafts a statement to exhonorate Kolčerukij of all wrong-doing for planting tung trees around his grave site. The comic effect of this document is heightened by the inclusion of repetition, particularly of anaforas ("starik Šaaban Larba"), and irrelevant details.

Старик Шаабан Ларба, по прозвищу Колчерукий, которое он получил еще до революции вместе с княжеской пулей, впоследствии оказавшейся меньшевистской, с первых же дней организации колхоза активно работает в артели, несмотря на частично высохшую руку /левая/.

Старик Шаабан Ларба, по прозвищу Колчерукий, имеет сына, который в настоящее время сражается на фронтах Отечественной войны и имеет правительственные награды /в скобках указывался адрес полевой почты/.

Старик Шаабан Ларба, по прозвищу Колчерукий, несмотря на преклонный возраст, в это трудное время не покладая рук трудится на колхозных полях, не давая отдыха своей пострадавшей вышеуказанной руке. Ежегодно он вырабатывает не менее четырехсот трудодней.

Правление колхоза, вместе с председателем сельсовета, заверяет, что тунговое дерево он пересадил на свою фиктивную могилу по ошибке, как дореволюционный малограмотный старик, за что будет оштрафован согласно уставу сельхозартели.[5]

Repetition is a traditional poetic device of folk-lore and one that Iskander employs. In Džansux--syn olenja ili evangelie po čegemski **of** Sandro iz Čegema**, further examples of anaphora occur--phrases recur, repeated word for word or sometimes with a slight variation. Each time Dzansux meets someone on the road practically the same scene follows.**

-- Это все путсяки, -- сказал пахарь, -- вот, если бы ты увидел Джансуха-Сына Оленя, вот кому бы ты подивился. Он самый мудрый человек в Абхазии, а, значит, считай, и во всем мире. Ни разу не слыша человеческой речи, он, услышав ее, выучил наш язык за пять дней! Слыхано ли такое?!

-- Я и есть Джансух-Сын Оленя, -- сказал Джансух, -- и я в самом деле выучил абхазский язык, только не за пять дней, а за два, хотя это не имеет

значение. Но я, признаюсь, и ломтя земли не смог бы съесть.[6]

Throughout the course of their journey, Ob"edalo and Opivalo repeat the same phrases and have the same argument. Ob"edalo continually states: "Xoču byt' povešennym na šee moej ljubymoj ženy."[7] On the other hand, Opivalo constantly says "Skoree djatel, dolbjačij derevo, umret ot sotrjasenija mozga,..."[8] Each objects when the other begins to repeat his favorite saying.

Dialogues also play an important role in Iskander's language. Urok igry v šaxmaty is an excellent example of this. It also is an experiment in a new style, a break from Iskander's usual mode of narration. The entirety of this sixteen page story consists of a conversation between a young man and his fiancee. The conversation comprises a highly imaginative description of the rules of the game of chess and the functions of the various pieces.

Dialogues perform a number of functions, such as helping to better characterize and individualize people. Mispronunciation of words might be included to differentiate a character's speech. Some Abkhazians do not speak much Russian. When they use incorrect Russian, this distortion often has a humorous effect, as in Brigadir Kjazym, where Baxut says "doktor, zop bolit" for "zub bolit." The fisherman in Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju pronounces "mne" and "menja" as "mine." This intensifies

the comical, somewhat negative impressions he creates. In Angličanin s ženoj i rebenkom the Englishman uses improper Russian ("Mij nanimajt", "Ja imejt akvalang!", and "Nabljudajt gorod!"[9]) which heightens the effect of ostranenie.

Conversations help to place a character in his milieu. The journalistic and bureaucratic cliches of Avtandil Avtandilovic and Platon Samsonovic establish their place in the newspaper world, specifically that of Krasnye subtropiki. Slang, colloquial expression, Abkhazian, Arabic, and Turkic words link characters with Abkhazia. The characters use expressions such as: "Lopni moj glazy."[10] "Ostav' ty etogo vyrygu, Kjazym."[11] "O čem govorit'--zelen'-melen'; lobia-mobia."[12]

Conversations contain non-Russian words, which are blended into the text in such a manner that they do not inhibit the reader's understanding of the story. Iskander translates the term after he uses it. Alixan chants from a common Moslem prayer in Arabic, "Bismilax iraxman iraxim!--Blažen, kto blažen...."[13] Aunt Xrisula speeks in Greek "Kendrepeso, Despina! (Ne stydno, Despina!)"[14] while Xarlampo exclaims in his Turkish, "Ej, gidi, dun'ja! (Ex, mir!)."[15] The narrator of Sozvezdie Kozlotura calls Vaxtang Bočua a "čangalist," using Abkhazian slang defined in the following paragraph. When a Menshevik officer uses the Georgian word "Ertoba" for unity,

Iskander has Sandro ask his friend for an explanation of the word. At other times Iskander does not translate the word, but instead makes the meaning clear from the remainder of the sentence. Characters often address each other as "kaco," Georgian for friend.

Iskander also uses dialogues of misunderstanding (or "comedy of errors"), a device used by many a writer. One such dialogue can be found in Sozvezdie kozlotura. When Vaxtang Bocua is telling the narrator about his up-coming speech on the goatibex, two old men completely fail to understand what is being said.

> Оба старика с уважением слушали Вахтанга, хотя явно ничего не понимали. Тот, что был с посохом, даже забыл про свою лунку и важно слушал его, слегка загнув ухо так, чтобы речь удобней вливалась в ушную раковину.
>
> -- С ума сойти, как говорят, -- сказал тот, что был с палкой.
>
> -- Наверное, из тех, что в радио говорят, -- сказал тот, что был с посохом.
>
> -- ...Но она, наша скромная коза, -- продолжал Вахтанг, -- мечтала о лучшей доле, скажем прямо: она мечтала встретиться с туром... И вот усилиями наших народных умельцев, -- а талантами земля наша богата, -- горный тур встречается с нашей скромной, домовитой и в то же время прелестной в самой своей скромности абхазской козой.[16]

Their comments heighten Vaxtang's diatribe on the goatibex, illustrating the absurdity of such empty words. The dialogue of misunderstanding is skillfully worked into the structure of this povest' and other works. In Iz

rasskazov o Čike Iskander works in a sensitive topic by employing this device. Čik is not able to understand the conversation between a prostitute and the police.

Iskander experiments with skaz only once, in _Neblagodarnyj prestupnik_. A semi-educated employee of the railroad militia is telling about the time he shot a man in self-defense for stealing potatoes off the train. His naive attempts to justify himself contain a multitude of awkward sentences.

> Но, дорогие гости, это отчасти было неверно потому, что если человек хочет исправиться -- он может исправиться, но может и не исправиться. Но если человек не хочет исправиться, он никогда не исправиться.
>
> На что надеялся этот преступник, не знаю. Может, думал, что но нашей маленькой станции весы не будет, или думал, что попадется по-русски не понимающий весовщик? Но у нас и грамотые кадры есть и весы есть.[17]

Structure

Iskander's shorter works (short stories, tales, and many individual chapters of his novel) are well constructed. The details and events are carefully chosen to produce one specific aim, a united whole. In autobiographical works, one or more incidents from his own life are given to illustrate the point Iskander is making. Foreshadowing is used to prepare the reader for later

developments. The very beginning of a story contains a hint as to what the outcome may be. By incorporating the end in the beginning, structural and thematic unity are emphasized.

Following the climax, Iskander brings his stories to a close in a number of ways. Frequently an aphorism is placed at the end of the story to summarize the meaning Iskander wants the reader to derive. In the final paragraph of Zapretnyj plod, for example, the narrator says that he learned that high principles never justify treachery. In other stories, Iskander views a subject from two different perspectives without drawing a conclusion at the end. Moj kumir starts with the child's view of his idol, the broad chested Jura Stavrakidi. Next the two meet again as adults. At this time the narrator finds out new information concerning his idol's bravery. The narrator ends by stating that he must reevaluate his childhood assessments. Letnim dnem is similar in that Iskander does not comment on the politically sensitive conversation between the narrator and a German tourist. The story ends when the foreigner departs, leaving the reader to evaluate the conversation for himself. Yet another conclusion unravels the plot complications. In Brigadir Kjazym following the climax of Timur's arrest, Iskander has Kjazym explain how he solved the mystery. Then Iskander adds a final statement regarding Timur's

trial and sentence. Thus he ties up all the loose ends of the story. The ending of Večernjaja doroga is similar. This story relates a number of humorous incidents that happen to the boy narrator on his way to his uncle's one night. The boy had made the trip to inform his mother that his brother was wounded in battle and wanted to see her. While the real purpose of the story is the humorous adventures of the boy, Iskander does not leave any unanswered questions regarding his brother. He informs the reader that his mother went to the hospital only to find that his brother was not really injured, just homesick.. Such conclusions enhance the sense of completeness for each story, strengthening its structural unity.

Narration

Iskander relies not on one type of narration, but uses different styles. Some narrative styles are used only once, others are repeated.

Urok igrí v šaxmaty is an experiment in styles. Iskander's two characters tell the story through their dialogue--not Iskander's usual method of narration.

In works concerning his childhood Iskander employs a two-fold narration, that of the child and that of the adult who recalls his childhood. The adult sets the scene and recedes into the background as the boy lives through

the experience. Following this, the adult reappears at the end of the story.

The first-person narration is effective, serving a number of purposes. It mainly reduces the emotional distance between the boy and the reader. Many of these stories explore the psychological growth of the boy. By seeing the world only from his limited point of view and by entering into his mind, sympathy for the boy is established. The reader faces each decision as the boy faces it. It brings about a parallel emotional response, near-identification. The reader more deeply experiences the truth when it is attained.

As much as he is an active participant, the boy is also important as a commentator on the life around him. He reinforces Iskander's values. Many times he is observant of falsity in others. Yet since he is a child, the boy is not always a reliable witness. The reader must adjust for the boy's naive interpretation of events and errors in judgement. This creates authenticity, for few children have an accurate understanding of all the complexities of the adult world. The young narrator also allows Iskander the opportunity to comment on a number of forbidden topics. The boy's misunderstandings and his analysis of events highlight their absurdity.

At the end of the story, the adult returns to the scene to provide an adult interpretation. Such is the

case in Zapretnyj plod. At times the adult becomes an active participant in the story. Childhood friends meet again as adults and reminisce about the events of long ago, shedding a new light on how the matter should be viewed. This occurs in Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok, Derevo detstva, and Moj kumir. This adult narrator can easily be identified with Iskander. His comments on life must be viewed as Iskander's. The final comments insure that the reader, though forgiving the boy, does not overlook the boy's faults.

There is another group of works closely aligned with stories of Iskander's childhood. Remzik and works about Čik are similar in style even though written in the third person. This narrator does not become a separate dramatic personality in these works. He is always the impersonal narrator, though he strictly limits the field of vision. These stories are still told from the point of view of a young boy (Čik or Remzik). The reader only learns about information the boy could have knowledge of. There is little commentary by the author concerning events outside the boy's range. In Remzik however, the narrator momentarily departs from Remzik to explain Aunt Ljusja's point of view. Since Remzik could never understand how Ljusja came to cheat on her husband, two short paragraphs by the narrator are inserted to verify Ljusja's

unfaithfullness and to provide insight into a matter incomprehensible to Remzik.

The narrator allows the reader into Čik's and Remzik's minds, withholding insight into the minds of the other characters. The same sympathy for the small hero is developed. The reader goes through the experience with the boy. Remzik's isolation is deeply felt. The reader wrestles with the problem along with him.

The two boys are not always reliable witnesses either. The reader has to adjust for Čik's analysis of the purges, prostitution, and contradictory laws. These naive boys are allowed to comment on items not seen in print in the Soviet Union. The narrator does not elaborate further, but remains silent, allowing the reader to correct the misinterpretation and to form his own mature opinion on the matter.

Sozvezdie kozlotura, Lov foreli v verxovjax Kodora, Svjatoe ozero, Letnim dnem, Angličanin s ženoj i rebenkom, and Morskoj skorpion among others are first person narrations concerning the narrator's young adult years. The narrator is closely identified with IsKander--so closely that the reader assumes that the opinions expressed are those of IsKander. The narrator functions as a commentator on the world around him. He is a somewhat naive, bumbling character who gains the reader's sympathy and confidence. His basic honesty proves him to

be a trustworthy companion, a reliable guide to people and events described and to the values of the author. His honesty puts him into conflict with the editor of the paper, the bureaucracy, and the government. His introspective thoughts highlight the falsity of the official position and reaffirm the correct moral values.

Letnim dnem departs somewhat from this pattern. Here the narrator meets a German tourist and begins to discuss life under the Nazis; the narrator no longer comments on or interprets the events the German relates. The reader is left to form his own opinions based on the analysis given by the German. Due to the sensitivity of the issue and the close parallel that could be drawn between the events of Nazi Germany and similar occurences in the Soviet Union, Iskander refrains from having the narrator reemphasize the meaning. Despite this, the voice of the German seems to merge with that of the narrator and Iskander. It is evident that the German tourist is in total agreement with the author. He has become the author's voice.

The main narrator of the novel Sandro iz Čegema is the same naive, honest, bumbling person of Sozvezdie kozlotura. Although the story of Sandro, the narrator makes himself a dramatized character who participates in the action of the novel, appearing in eleven of twenty-one chapters, including Djadja Sandro u sebja doma, Djadja

Sandro i ego ljubimec, Xranitel' gor, and Derevo detstva. Sometimes the narrator initially sets the scene for the story whereupon he disappears from the action, as happens in Xarlampo i Despina. At other times this narrator appears at the end to sum up such as he does in Umykanie ili zagadka Endurcev, Istorija molel'nogo dereva, and Džansux--syn olenja ili evangelie po-čegemski. His appearance is more frequent and sustained in the last half of the novel.

The author's second self becomes a trustworthy companion who guides the reader into the world of Čegem. In addition to direct comments to insure that the reader comes to the proper conclusion about events and to reaffirm certain values, a large amount of commentary is spent "chatting" with the reader. The narrator directly addresses the reader, interupting the story to talk about writing or anything else, including Lenin, Stalin, and the Tower of Pisa. This elaborate, rambling, whimsical commentary is interwoven into the narration and is an end in itself for it frequently has no relationship to the story.

> Чувствую, что сейчас начну признаваться в своих слабостях. Старый испытанный прием. На нем я в свое время сделал свою литературную карьеру. Я думал, что этот прием уже себя исчерпал. Но, оказывается, нет. Этот прием вообще неисчерпаем. Читателю приятно чувствовать себя несколько умнее автора. От этого он испытывает удивительный приток энергии, веселья и, в конечном итоге, благодарности автору. А автору, в свою очередь, приятно, что ему удалось слегка задурить голову читателя. Он от этого

> тоже испытывает веселье. Вот так, взаимно взбодрившись, мы, гдядишь, скоротаем вечерок.[18]

This reminds one of Gogol''s narrator--in its ridiculing manner. The digressive chitchat continues for another four pages, concluding:

> Нет, так нельзя. Чувствую, что меня все время заносит, а остановиться не могу. Надо сейчас же взять себя в руки и немедленно вернуться в строгие рамки сюжета.[19]

The relationship between the narrator and the reader forms a sub-plot of its own, independent of the story of Sandro and Abkhazia. The narrator helps to achieve a causal unity in the novel by his presence and personality. The reader senses the narrator's presence in other chapters as well even though they are mainly third person narrations. The narrative may be interupted by an aside, as it is in the first chapter where an unidentified "I" converses with Sandro or the "I" might add a fact such as occurs in Princ Oldenburgskij.

Thus the narrator is one of the major cohesive elements of the novel. Much of the novel concerns Sandro of Cegem, whose opinions are frequently contrasted with those of the narrator. Sandro, as is the narrator, is both naive and worldly-wise; although their wisdom covers different spheres. The two men correct each other's interpretations of the world.

The entire novel is not told in the first person by the narrator. A number of chapters are onmiscient third person narrations, beginning with the first chapter.

Brigadir Kjazym is a third person narration told from the point of view of Kjazym. The author actively controls information here, withholding from the reader Kjazym's thoughts and actions concerning the theft. The reader is only allowed to see into Kjazym's mind on certain matters. The reader sees and hears Kjazym but does not learn about his motives until the mystery is solved. At this point Kjazym explains it all to his old friend Baxut. Thus Iskander manipulates the distance between the reader and Kjazym.

In Rasskaz mula starogo Xabuga, the narration shifts to first person again with no comments by the author. But here the narrator is the mule Arapka. This allows Iskander yet another voice to express his views on various aspects of life including collectivization and the purges.

Iskander does not limit himself to any one method of narration. He chooses the method best suited to the needs of a particular work. At times the narrator is closely identified with the author; the story is told in the first person. This seems to be Iskander's favorite method. At other times the narration is presented in the third person with a strictly controlled point of view allowing the reader to see things only from the vantage of one

character. In yet other works, the narration shifts to allow an inside view of several characters. There are other methods as well.

Digressions

Iskander's works abound with digressions. Iskander loves to get off the main path and follow up a seemingly insignificant detail or side theme. His reasons for including digressions in a particular work vary. Digressions are effectively used to add an informal conversational tone to Iskander's prose. While setting an informal chatty tone, they add authenticity plus help characterize the narrator. In this manner Iskander fills in the details about a character's life or about a particular situation. Igroki contains a six-page digression explaining how Daša came to live with Kolja Zarxidis. Along with her history, this passage includes such details as the fact that she liked Turkish coffee which she washed down with Logidze Brothers lemon fizz and that she also read coffee grounds interpreting them with the help of her dreams.

Other digressions may be included for humorous effect. Bol'šoj den' bol'šogo doma contains two stories told by Sandro to entertain a guest. One story tells how bees were taught to cross a bridge over a river. The second story is about a sheat fish that drank milk from a cow, who would stand in the water of the river to cool off.

In Morskoj skorpion there are numerous digressions taking the form of flashbacks or dreams by the semi-delirious Sergej. These digressions are all related to Sergej's attempts to find true love and the real meaning of love. They are a vital element, essential to the development of the main theme. These digressions reveal Sergej's spiritual pain which parallels the physical pain caused by the sting of the sea scorpion.

Digressions are also used to relieve the tension that has built up. In Utraty the story-line is emotional. Zenon's sister has just passed away after a long debilitating illness. Following the funeral the immediate family is sitting in the living room. Zenon's brother-in-law recalls an incident from his childhood, in which he explains how the people dealt with a case of small pox in their village. The story, interesting in and of itself, is framed and interupted by several other incidents also about his mother, now an eighty-year-old woman, who cannot understand that the actors on the television are not really in the room. This serves to break the heavy, emotional mood of the story and to release the built up tension before the narrative returns to its sorrowful theme.

Another work exhibiting the use of digressions to break tension is Brigadir Kjazym. Kjazym questions Timur about borrowing money while hinting that he, Kjazym, knew

Timur has a large sum of stolen money. Their conversation, occurring during a celebration, is cut short by the other guests. A humorous story told by the hunter Tendel immediately follows this strained exchange. In addition to relieving the suspense, this interlude retards the plot development. Earlier in the story Kjazym was asked to help solve the theft of kolkhoz money from the safe. While thinking about this crime, Kjazym collects honey from his log hives. This digression serves to depict Abkhazian farm life, distracts the reader from the story line, slows the development of the plot, and releases tension.

Sozvezdie kozlotura contains several digressions which are deeply embedded in the structure of the work. Here the digressions are part of the antithetical structure of the tale. They contain lyrical passages about the narrator's childhood and about a romantic episode. True emotions, honest feelings are in evidence in these parts, juxtaposing the falsity of the campaign to promote the kozlotur. The scenes describing the progress of the campaign alternate with those about the narator's life outside his job. By parodying the journalistic jargon and contrasting it repeatedly with lyrical digressions, Iskander emphasizes the falsity of this, or any other, campaign.

As these examples point out, Iskander's digressions become an integral part of the work. However, Iskander does not always motivate the use of digressions so expertly in some works. Although the digression may be an excellent passage in and of itself, it does not blend into the work. Some passages have so many digressions that the reader loses the thread of the story. Such problems occur in a number of chapters of Sandro iz Čegema, making these chapters less interesting.

Xarlampo i Despina is one such chapter. The shepherd Xarlampo and his fiancee Despina are two star-crossed lovers. This chapter tells the story of their long eight-year courtship, as Xarlampo tries to amass enough money to start up his own farm. Embedded in this chapter is a six-page digression about Lenin. It details why the Abkhazians are insulted that this good "abrek" has not been buried in the ground, although the vampire Stalin has been. While this passage is an excellent satiric piece as are many of Iskander's digressions, there is no structural reason to include it in the narrative of this particular chapter because its inclusion mars the the structural unity of the chapter.

Xranitel' gor ili Narod znaet svoix geroev is another such chapter. After one page, Iskander goes off into a twenty-four page digression before returning to his original story. Four travellers are trying to get a ride

back to town after hunting. The narrator then launches into an anecdote about a podium. He then turns to describe Andrej one of his companions, again diverging from the topic to describe one of Andrej's painting. This painting of three men in Blue Makintoshes causes quite a stir. This digression leads into another incident concerning Abkhazian Negroes. Here the chapter switches back to the topic of the painting. This leads into the discussion of problems surrounding the painting "Goatibex on Svanian Tower." Again the discussion returns to Andrej's painting which stirred up a lawsuit. It is only after the narrator explains how this matter was resolved that he tries to return to his original story. Again he digresses to explain why he included this entire incident about the picture; i.e. he is unable to be concise. Each story can be told only as it wants to be told. Perhaps the story provides a pretext for the digressions, for the digressions become so dominant that they overshadow the main story, similar to Sterne's Tristram Shandy. Even if this is the case, the constant shifts in narration creates a disjointed text which leaves the reader confused.

The digression is often used to provide humor, to develop the main theme, to relieve the tension and suspense, to contrast ideas, and to inform the reader. In other instances (Sandro iz Čegema, for example), digressions are not justified because they do not

strengthen structural unity. Instead they produce a fragmented picture, supplementing and reinforcing the loose, rambling narrative of the novel.

Foreshadowing

Events, information, and hints are arranged early in the work to prepare for the further development of the story. This strengthens the compositional and thematic cohesiveness of each piece.

Iskander uses such a foreshadowing device at the beginning of Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok. As the boy goes running down the street to the store, he experiences an unusual feeling of elation. This excitement is mentioned several times. The reader feels that there must be some reason for this mood. Then the boy seems to see money lying on the ground. This vision convinces him that he will soon find a wad of banknotes. The reader also comes to expect that the boy will discover something along the way to the store, an expectation which is fullfilled in the next paragraph.

Foreshadowing is used more extensively in Zapretnyj plod. At the beginning of the story, Iskander tells of the Moslem law against eating pork, explaining how his desire to eat the meat grew. He even dreamed of its taste. Yet he resisted all temptation. The reader is set up for his downfall. However Iskander adds a twist to the plot for it is his sister who succumbs. Iskander is

outraged and alludes vaguely to retribution which will befall her. She starts to choke on the meat, but recovers. Iskander states that retribution would have to wait, implying that he would later make sure justice triumphed. The mood of anticipation is further heightened when Iskander goes home early. His sister fears that he will denounce her. The tension builds at the dinner table the following evening when Iskander pretends he will tell on her and then speaks of something else. In this manner Iskander focuses the reader's attention on the climax, the denunciation scene.

Remzik is also developed through foreshadowing devices. From the beginning Iskander hints that all is not right in Remzik's life. Remzik is sitting on the porch telling about his uncle Bagrat's exploits in the war, when the group of twelve-year-old boys is invited inside to learn to dance. Remzik declines, in part feeling that it is not proper during the war. This connection with improper behavior carries over to his Aunt Ljusja, for Remzik recognizes the songs from his aunt's records. Throughout the work tales of Bagrat's bravery alternate with accounts of his wife's betrayal, impelling Remzik to act on his uncle's behalf.

This builds a feeling that Remzik is being forced into a fateful course of action. Iskander reinforces this later in the work by linking Bagrat's story with that of

Remzik feels he is a coward since he was afraid the night his father was arrested at home and pretended he was asleep, failing to say good-bye. Now Remzik feels that he is betraying his uncle if he remains silent again.

Additional foreshadowing is found at the beginning of the story. The porch scene is interupted by the presence of someone in the shadows across the street. This living, terrifying piece of darkness with a cap brings fear to Remzik. Future developments are hinted at when Remzik realizes that it could be the doctor who works in the same hospital where his aunt works. Remzik says "Mama byla prava!"[20] At this point, the reader is left to guess about what. It is not until later when Remzik arrives home and sees the same cap from the shadow sitting on his aunt's bedpost that Remzik spells out what his mother meant. The doctor, linked with fear and shadow, remains nameless, being called "etot," removing him from the ranks of humans.

Along the path home to his village there are numerous hints of danger awaiting Remzik. He will leave "forever"--a term which seems to forebode evil. Hitchhiking home, he is offered a ride home by a carload of drunk sailors. Everything he sees keeps reminding him of his unhappiness. The women met on his trip home are all possible traitors, just like his aunt Ljusja. Even his grandmother is described in terms of a traitor--she is

a good old woman, who has passed the age when it is possible to become a traitor.

Once home the danger becomes associated with his grandfather's new horse. Although clearly afraid, Remzik agrees to ride the horse, knowing that it has thrown Kolčerukij--a noted horseman. The fear is heightened when his grandmother expresses her disapproval and shouts that the matter rests on his grandfather's soul. The feeling of impending trouble is strengthened when Kolčerukij stops to talk to someone and sends Remzik down to the brook alone. Events come to a climax here. Remzik decides that he must jump into the pool from the precipice. The danger is underscored when the horse refuses to jump at first and again when the horse's head hits sharply against Remzik's cheek as they surface from the jump. The foreshadowing of Remzik's tragic death is complete following the third jump, when the action switches from the preparation for the jump to the scene of Remzik's dog running home alone, followed by the picture of the horse coming from the woods alone nibbling grass along the way. The animals alert Remzik's grandparents. Once the others have been warned, Iskander swiftly concludes the story of Remzik's tragic death.

The element of suspense is also well developed in several other works. Letnim dnem contains the absorbing description of an encounter with the Gestapo. This scene

conveys the psychological drama of a West German physicist when he is called upon to spy for the Nazis. The tension is built up and released several times as the West German tries to determine if the Nazis know about the one blot on his record from student days. The psychological tension of the cat and mouse game is masterfully developed. IsKander releases tension periodically by having the story interupted by the conversation between a pensioner and a lonely woman. The pensioner's humorous didactic opinions on books and various news items interspersed throughout the grave tale counterbalance the serious tone of the story.

Brigadir Kjazym is a detective story incorporating many devices to build suspense. Kjazym has agreed to find a thief. Initially IsKander uses hints. Kjazym pretends that his brother is in trouble in the city for embezzling money and spreads the story that he needs to borrow 50,000 roubles to prevent even more trouble. Kjazym baits his trap for Timur, the suspect, and slowly reels in his thief, purposefully arranging things so Timur could not find Kjazym for several days. Everything is arranged to suggest Timur's guilt and to point towards a confrontation between Kjazym and Timur.

Throughout this story, IsKander swiftly builds tension and then releases it. Digressions are used to retard the plot and relieve the emotional charge. Each new danger is

swiftly followed by another once Kjazym confronts Timur. It is not until Kjazym gives the money to Baxat that the climax is completed. The remainder of the story is anticlimax, revealing exactly how Kjazym came to his conclusions, tricking Timur into showing his hand.

Iskander integrates the element of suspense in these works. At times the suspense is sustained throughout the work, as it is in Remzik, Brigadir Kjazym, and Piry Valtazara. However at other times, it is present in only one segment of a work. In Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil, suspense builds in the passage detailing how Iskander thought his crazy uncle was a German spy, but it is lacking in the other sections of this short story. In each instance this element is carefully woven into the text.

Characterization

Iskander's prose is filled with vivid descriptions of the people of Abkhazia. These characters frequently reappear in subsequent works, allowing Iskander to develop their personalities more fully. Considerable skill is used to bring each character to life.

Main characters, as is traditional for Russian classical literature, fall into two categories. Those characters in the first group receive minimal physical description or get none at all. Included here are Iskander himself both as a boy and as an adult. Čik,

Sergej and Zenon are alter egos for Iskander and, thus, also receive no description. Those closest to Iskander, his immediate family, are part of this group as well. The lack of individualization of his mother, father, sister, brother, and grandmother enables these characters to imply any Mother, Father, etc. Other characters--his grandfather, aunts, uncles, and neighbors--are provided with the details of their appearances. This is especially true if a story is devoted to one particular character.

When portraying a character, Iskander pays particular attention to his eyes. They are always expressive, conveying every sort of emotion. Eyes flash, glare, implore, command, suggest, watch, flicker with resentment, look inquiringly, hurl lightning bolts, peer searchingly, and express boredom, menacing alertness, doom, contempt, astonishment, malice, or mocking warmth. People frequently carry on conversations with their eyes alone. Iskander/Čik talks to the other children and his dog Belka with his eyes. Likewise Iskander tries to gain forgiveness from the Svan mountain man in another such conversation in the chapter Xranitel' gor ili Narod znaet svoix geroev from Sandro iz Čegema. In this passage gazes beseech, implore, suggest, explain, and nag.

The shape of a person's eyes is many times noted together with the emotion they express. The Gestapo officer in Letnim dnem has dark, almond-shaped eyes, while

his superior has bovine eyes. The airsick passenger in Moja milicija menja berežet has the same bovine eyes, which engage in a silent conversation with Iskander. In Den' i noč' Čika the boy Boco is lobster-eyed, while the butchers have bulging eyes. Keropčik of Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju has goat-like eyes; Baxut's are small black-olive eyes. The peaceful merchant Alixan is associated with his "Kruglye brovi nad kruglymi glazami." This feature becomes a leit-motif reflected in those works featuring Alixan.

It is not just eyes that convey a character's feelings; eyebrows are equally expressive. In addition to their use to portray Alixan, the secretaries attending Stalin's feast in Sandro iz Čegema are associated with raised eyebrows throughout the chapter. Eyebrows are also mentioned repeatedly in Angličanin s ženoj i rebenkom. The Englishman raises his sun-bleached eyebrows in amazement or question. They set off his blazing, blue eyes.

Iskander draws a correspondence between his character and a particular, salient feature, especially one that conveys an important aspect of his personality. Šaaban Larba, as his nickname Kolčerukij suggests, is linked to his predominant physical trait--his withered arm. This appendage is only one of his outlandish qualities. It compliments the bragging, cantakerous personality of this

peasant who likes to immitate a rooster crowing so that all the local roosters will join in. The withered arm comes to represent his unique personality.

The Palmist is another striking, vigorous character. In the several works where the palmist is present, Iskander emphasizes his firey red hair and beard together with his flashing eyes. These strange features reinforce the portrait of an eccentric individual at odds with life around him.

When Iskander writes about his grandfather, he takes care to include a description of his hands and feet. His hands are strong and sinewy like the rest of him. They show the many years of hard work Iskander's grandfather put into building his home and working his land. His feet are likened to those of the apostles and saints--continuing the positive image of a hard working, good man.

Minor characters are also associated with a particular trait. In Sozvezdie kozlotura the two old men's noses are likened to walking sticks:

> Рядом с правлением под могучим шатром орехового дерева в традиционной позе патриархов сидели два старика абхазца. Один из них держал в руке палку, другой -- посох. Я заметил и радостно удивился тому, что крючковатый загиб рогатульки на посохе одного старика соответствовал крючковатому носу самого старика, тогда как другой старик был с прямым носом и держал палку без всяких ответвлений.[21]

They are reduced to caricature, being identified merely as the old man with the staff and the one with the walking stick. Another instance is found in the chapter Piry Valtasara of Sandro iz Čegema. The district secretaries become raised eyebrows registering surprise.

Tools for characterization are also lexical and are discussed in more detail in the section on language. Each character's speech is tailored to his age and background. Conversations have the further important function of allowing the reader into the character's mind. They reveal his thoughts so the reader is better able to understand and evaluate the speaker. The German tourist in Letnim dnem presents his views on friendship, loyalty, and decency. During his conversation with Čik in Nočnye tajny, Jason expounds on his criminal exploits. When Kjazym talks to his old friend Baxut at the end of Brigadir Kjazym, he explains his reasons for suspecting Timur and how he broke Timur down completely.

At the same time, conversations show how a character interacts with others, thus disclosing another important part of his personality. The conversations between Baxut and Kjazym also reveal the friendly rivalry between the two men. The same rivalry is apparent when Kolčerukij and Mustafa argue. The special relationship between a grandfather and his grandson is unfolded in Dedušķa. Iskander's grandfather takes the time to explain things to

the boy, talking to him as an equal. Arguments between the Rich Tailor and Alixan expose a relationship in which the tailor must dominate Alixan. The dialogues between Kjazym and Nuca concerning household matters contain an excellent description of the relationship between an Abkhazian peasant and his wife.

Through his speech, each character is individualized by revealing his opinions and relationships with others. This illustrates and adds to what the narrator has already stated. The reader is provided with more information enabling him to understand and to judge the character.

To further develop a character's personality, Iskander shows each character in action. In Dedu$\check{s}$ka, his grandfather is shown relentlessly chopping down bushes. Throughout the story, the emphasis is on his hard-working nature. Kjazym is also shown as a serious, hard-working man. He hoes, tends bees, cuts shingles for the roof of the kolkhoz tobacco shed, and looks after his sick cow. Iskander firmly establishes the link between these two peasants and the land.

In other instances a person is associated with a personal mannerism, frequently for humorous effect. In Strana $\check{z}$udes, Iskander's friend Viktor is described as a fanatic when it comes to microbes. He is a merciless exterminator who carries his disinfectant sprays with him wherever he goes. As soon as he arrives in his hotel room

in Kamčatka, Viktor goes through his sanitizing routine. This same mannerism technique is used to draw the portrait of the Rich Tailor. He is frequently out on his balcony ironing. From here he interferes in the events taking place in the courtyard below. While on the balcony, the Rich Tailor waters his plants by drinking water which he then spits out into the flower pots. This absurd habit is noted on several occasions and seems to underscore the tailor's strange, petty personality.

Repeatedly in Iskander's prose, a character is placed in a situation which tests him. This is Iskander's favorite device to force a character into a position which reveals the character's true self. The hero's response shows how honest a person he is or exposes a major flaw in his personality. Some pass the test, others fail. But all is not necessarily lost when a character fails his test, if he realizes his mistake and learns from it.

In the stories of his youth, Iskander describes himself and his feeling at a moment of challenge. He must go to the mill by himself to get the corn ground and faces up to the task. Overcoming his fears, he teaches himself to swim. Despite the problems and inconvenience, he includes his friend Lesik in group exploits. When he becomes aware of the imprisonment of Nika's father, Čik protects her from this knowledge. But Iskander/Čik does not always pass the test. When his sister eats pork at

the neighbor's, Iskander tells on her. However, he realizes his mistake and this incident serves to teach him an important lesson.

Iskander's boyhood idol, Jura Stavrakidi, is also shown in many situations which test his courage--learning to swim, walking a swaying highbeam, and stealing sausage from the school cafeteria. He passes all these tests with flying colors, only to fail the most important test and lose Iskander's respect. Jura wants to fight a younger, smaller boy and lies to force him to fight.

At other times, Iskander devises a test of wits where the clever must prove their intelligence. When he was a boy, Iskander found himself in the position of not being able to admit that he could not tell time. He found a way to teach himself to tell time and get out from under the hold of Eric. Sandro and Kjazym match wits with thieves and manage to outsmart them. Sandro finds himself in numerous ticklish situations and extricates himself by devising elaborate plans to outmaneuver his opponents.

Other adults do not fare so well. The Rich Tailor in Bogatyj portnoj i drugie and the kindergarten teacher of Detskij sad are each tempted by a pear. While the tailor is harvesting pears from the communal tree, the children point out a particularly large, ripe pear hidden from view high in the tree. All other pears are put in the communal basket, but this, the best pear, is tucked into the Rich

Tailor's pocket. He feels he is more deserving. A similar situation develops in Detskij sad. A teacher breaks up an argument between two children over a large pear, saying that the pear belongs to all of them and will go into the fruit compote that all will have for dinner. Yet there is the pear in the teacher's bag as she sets off for home; it was not in the communal compote after all.

Another major device used by Iskander is to allow the reader inside a character's mind, uncovering his thoughts and emotions which run the gamut from fear to anger, to betrayal, to satisfaction, to love, to joy. This helps the reader to understand and evaluate a character. At the same time, it allows the reader to empathize with the hero, to identify with him. The reader becomes sympathetic to the hero's situation.

The narrator supplies insight into certain characters' minds. Those stories that are first person narrations of Iskander's childhood and adult years allow the reader to face a problem together with the hero and to know what the hero is thinking each step of the way to resolving the problem. Through this omniscient narration, Iskander creates a detailed psychological portrait.

This carries over to Iskander's alter egos Čik, Sergej, and Zenon. Although third person narrations, the works in which they are present are told strictly from their limited view points. The narrator provides

commentary on their thoughts and feelings without allowing a glimpse into the inner workings of anyone else's mind. Others must reveal themselves through their words and deeds. This occurs most extensively in Morskoj skorpion. There is little action in this work devoted to Sergej's feelings and problems. Two other characters, Sandro and Remzik, are closely identified with Iskander. The narrator also explains their thoughts and motives.

However, Iskander does not enter the minds of all his main characters. Even though they are the central heroes in short stories, the Rich Tailor, Kolčerukij, and the Palmist are only described externally. Their portraits are completed through the comments and opinions of other characters, their own speech and actions. The narrator often comments on a person's behavior. He will then follow this up with an example to illustrate the point he just made. His statements as well as those of the boy narrator, Čik, and Remzik, offer valuable clues as to how a person should be viewed. They seem to speak for Iskander and to be his judges of truth and honesty.

Imagery, a major element of Iskander's prose, is used extensively for characterization. The images carry numerous additional indirect associations which expand the reader's understanding of the character and his emotions. In addition to providing details to complete a character's portrait, similes and metaphors provide important clues to

how Iskander views the character. Those he respects are likened to someone of high morals. Less flattering imagery conveys Iskander's disapproval. The use of imagery for characterization is discussed in detail in the following section.

Physical description, individualized speech, behavior, opinions of others, insight into a character's thoughts, and imagery are combined to bring each character to life. Each person becomes a unique individual. Iskander's skill in manipulating language and in using vivid images allows the reader to see and hear the character, to feel what he feels.

Imagery

Iskander's descriptions are densely packed with imagery that evokes multiple associations. Descriptions are used to bring out associations not always readily apparent. In one passage, Motorcycle gloves are used to link the present with the past:

> От нечего делать я надел на руки его перчатки. Они были тяжелые, и я почувствовал себя по локоть погруженным в средневековье. Я почувствовал, что центр тяжести моей сущности переместился в сторону моих утяжеленных рук. Я почувствовал легкое желание сжать в этих турнирных перчатках рыцарское копье или меч.[22]

The atmoshpere of the Middle Ages is conveyed. In part this image is transfered to Tengiz, the owner of the

gloves who rushes off to battle the Endurskij truck drivers.

In his descriptions simile, metaphor, and symbol are used to provide vivid images. By drawing concrete parallels, Iskander better illustrates an action or emotion. These devices are also used to create an atmosphere and the help characterize.

Simile

Similes are particularly abundant in Iskander's prose. In juxtaposing two objects, a common feature is brought out, enabling the reader to more clearly visualize the subject (or tenor, to use I. A. Richards' term). The object that the tenor is compared with is the vehicle.

The cliché has found its way into Iskander's imagery. He uses such similes as: "pobelel, kak smert'," [23] "paxnet, kak roza," [24] and "zolotistaja, kak med." [25] Such similes may be reworked a little bit to make them more concrete, such as: "luna napominala bol'šoj zakopčennyj krug gornogo syra." [26] Here it is not just cheese the moon resembles, but smoked mountain cheese. However there are few clichés in Iskander's works. He prefers to create similes which are new and striking.

Frequently the tenor and vehicle are chosen from widely differing spheres to attract the reader's attention. The disparity sharpens the effect, creating a more successful simile, as occurs in the following simile:

"Načali palit' zenitki, i vidno bylo, kak vokrug nego razryvalis' oduvančiki snarjadov."[27]

The tenor and vehicles are drawn from five sources: the animal kingdom (animals, birds, insects), nature (forces of nature, trees, plants), every-day objects and activities, people, and abstract ideas. However abstract ideas are infrequently used by Iskander for the tenor or vehicle of his similes. In Den' i noč' čika an abstract emotion is used as the vehicle: "Golos ee obdal čika kakoj-to velikolepnoj volnoj bodrosti."[28]

Nature is important to Iskander and this is reflected in his imagery. In describing how good life felt while in the village for the summer, Iskander draws his simile from the land: "Zdorovyj vozdux, zdorovo pitanie--i ja nalivalsja sokom, kak tykva na xorošo unavožennom ogorode."[29] Forces of nature are an additional source for his similes. In the following passage, Iskander likens applause to the wind:

> Когда Сталин опустил руки и сел, аплодисменты замокли. Но не сразу, потому что те, что сидели подальше, этого не заметили. Они замокли, как замолкает ветерок, прошелестев в листве большого дерева.[30]

Similes drawn from nature also enhance the visual impression, helping to create a lyrical tone in a work. The peaceful mood is established at the beginning of Deduška through Iskander's description of the forest:

> Иногда со стороны моря доносится какой-то случайный порыв ветра, и тогда тени на земле дробятся, расходятся, между ними пробегают солнечные пятна, а птичий щебет усиливается, словно порыв ветра стряхивает его с деревьев, как дождинки.[31]

Animals, birds, and insects are likewise used for both tenor and vehicle of similes. In a description of his attempt to read Hegel, Iskander says:

> Вообще я читал эту книгу, раскрывая на какой-нибудь стихотворной цитате. Я обчитывал вокруг нее некоторое пространство, стараясь держаться возле нее, как верблкд возле оазиса.[32]

A further example can be found in the story U strane Čudes. Iskander observes the activity going on in Avačinskaja Bay. This gives rise to another unusual simile:

> У пассажирской пристани возвышался громадный теплоход, и он рядом с этими сейнерами, буксирами, лодчонками казался ироничным и добрым, как слон в гостях в детском саду.[33]

Nature and animals combine in a simile occurring in Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju:

> Со стороны посмотреть, кажется, что вот-вот человека раздавит многотонная масса воды, а на самом деле, если ты успел поднырнуть под гребень, волна перепрыгивает через тебя, как нерасчетливый хишник.[34]

Animals are often compared with people, such similes have an anthropomorphizing tendency. The rooster in Petux

is likened to an oriental despot in an extended epic simile that makes the rooster a maharaja with a harem. Another epic simile compares a stray dog chewing on a bone with an old sea captain:

> Чик мельком подумал, что она сейчас похожа на старого капитана с трубкой. Чик про него читал какую-то книжку, но сейчас не мог вспомнить, что это была за книжка. Там был такой старый капитан с трубкой. Он на вид был свирепый, но на самом деле был очень добрый. Все свирепые капитаны с трубкой, про которых читал Чик, в конце концов оказывались очень добрыми. Конечно, могло оказаться, что и эта собака окажется доброй, но кто ее знает. Ведь сама-то она и не подозревает, что похожа на свирепого капитана с трубкой, который просто так, чтобы было интересней, напустил на себя свирепость.[35]

The simile is repeated again on the next pages. The details are carefully chosen, for Čik is attempting to convince himself that the dog is not dangerous and will not bite him. Thus both the sea captain and the dog may look fearsome, but in reality they are quite kind.

Conversely people are sometimes compared with animals, birds and insects. The simile provides an important clue to how Iskander sees a character. When the tenor is a person and the vehicle is chosen from the animal kingdom, the simile has a lowering effect and may convey an unfavorable impression of the character. Onik's mother is likened to a parrot who repeat her favorite saying over and over. In portraying Avtandil Avtandilovič, the editor of Krasnye Subtropiki, Iskander wants to show how he

changes with the prevailing political mood:

> К этому времени я окончательно уяснил слабость Автандила Автандиловича. Этот мощный человек цепенел, как кролик, под гипнозом формулы. Если он выдвигивал какую-нибудь формулу, переспорить его было невозможно. Зато можно было перезарядить его другой формулой, более свежей. Когда он заговорил насчет творчества трудящихся и воспитания талантов, мне пришла в голову формула относитеьно заигрывания с массами, не но я ее не решился высказать. Все-таки сюда она не слишком подходила.[36]

Another such satirical simile occurs in Sandro iz Čegema to depict Stalin's secretary:

> А его личный секретарь Поскребышев в это время бегал по берегу, как курица, которая высидела утенка, и все кудахтал:
> -- Я буду жаловаться в Политбюро! Я буду жаловаться в Политбюро![37]

Other such downward similes are used for humorous effect. Lesik falls as he is crossing a stream: "On šlepnulsja v vodu i zabaraxtalsja neukljuže ševelja nogami i rukami, kak perevernutyj žuk."[38]

Frequently people are both the tenor and the vehicle of a simile. These similes do more than add details to a character's portrait. The simile is also a component of characterization that is used for a variety of purposes. Iskander selects those expressions that will help convey a particular image of a person. Deduška is a portrait of Iskander's grandfather, which is drawn with the use of a number of similes. Here Iskander conveys his grandfather's youthful appearance:

> Небольшого роста, гибкий, сейчас он похож на ладного подростка, решившего побаловаться над обрывом.[39]

To describe his idol Jura Stavrakidi, Iskander compares him to a warrior in his saddle who turns to review his troops. On several occasions, Jura is likened to Hercules, as are a life guard and Iskander's geography teacher. Such similes carry a positive connotation, conveying Iskander's approval. Those Iskander respects are likened to someone of high moral standing. His grandfather is compared with the prophets, Uncle Kolja with a Roman senator, Uncle Kjazym with King Lear.

A wide disparity between the tenor and the vehicle can supply humor. The following passage from Petux illustrates one such case, where, as a boy, Iskander was fighting a rooster:

> Я успел переменить позицию и отступал в сторону двери, прикрываясь табуреткой, как римлянин щитом.[40]

As an element of characterization, the simile also provides a vivid picture of an emotion felt by a character. In Pod sen'ju evkaliptov, Iskander illustrates his mother-in-law's outrage by comparing her with the tsar Peter: "Okamenev ot vozmuščenija, teš̆a mol̆a smotrit na vas vzgljadom Petra, gljadjaščego na izmennika-syna s izvestnoj kartiny Ge."[41] In Petux Iskander describes how

he felt when he stole eggs out of the nests: "Čuvstvuja sebja odnovremenno bagdadskim vorom i udačlivym lovcom žemčuga, ja vysasyval dobyču, tut že nadbiv ee o stenu."[42] In Den' i noč' Čika, Iskander again uses simile to make emotions clearer. When Čik is successful in finding a large clump of resin to make into chewing gum, Iskander draws the parallel between his feelings and those of a gold digger who just struck it rich. The airport official of V strane čudes "vdrug ulybnulsja, kak rebenok, kotoryj dolgo pritvorjalsja serditym, no ne vyderžal."[43] These similes present the emotion in a new light, enabling the reader to feel it again from a new perspective.

Iskander's similes are also drawn from everyday life. Eggs, butter, milk, šašlyk, cheese, salt, rope, clothes pins, string, a ragged edge on glass, and a sofa, to name just a few items, are used as the vehicles of many similes. Resin is the tenor of several similes which have vehicles from everyday life. "Mastika byla želtaja i pokryvala dno razvilki, kak koročka slivok dno kastrjul'ki."[44] As it melts the resin brings forth another association from the kitchen. "Na dne korobki zašipela podtaivajuščaja smola kak maslo na skovorodke."[45] An additional parallel from the kitchen occurs in Večernjaja doroga. "Sum vody vozbuždala ix appetit, kak šipen'je šašlyka pered obedom."[46] When Čik describes a mussel he finds when he dives into the sea, he says that

he "vzjalsja za druguju midiju, šatavšujusja kak zub."[47] This is an apt simile drawn from the world of a twelve-year-old boy.

In his prose Iskander also uses extended epic similes. Vecernjaja doroga contains an epic simile describing the cemetery:

> Кладбище напоминало карликовый городок с железными оградами, зелеными огородцами могил, игрушечными дворцами, скамеечками, деревянными и железными крышами. Казалось, люди после смерти, сильно уменьшившись и поэтому став злее и опаснее, продолжают здесь жить тихой, недоброй жизнью.[48]

This epic simile is followed by another simile in which the shadows lie on the ground like heavy, motionless boulders. The imagery here serves to help create an eirie mood as the boy walks through the cemetery alone at night.

At other times Iskander uses the epic simile for comic effect. Such is the case when he describes how his aunt was pursued by suitors. She battles legions of suitors who storm her like a fortress. This simile then becomes a metaphor with the fortress as the vehicle.

Metaphor

Iskander's imagery contains metaphors in addition to his similes, although this device is used less extensively. His metaphors operate much as his similes do; the sources of tenor and vehicle are the same, plus the metaphor serves to make an emotion more concrete.

Fear is the tenor in one vivid metaphor conveyed by a wild horse. "Dikij i točnyj kon' straxa vynes i vybrosil menja u zdanija školy."[49] Treachery is another abstract idea that is described in concrete terms: "Vsjakoe predatel'stvo--éto volosataja gusenica malen'koj zavisti, kakimi by princ pami ono ni prikryvalos'."[50]

A complex web of images develops the personality of the rooster in Petux. Metaphors combine with similes discussed above to strengthen the personification of the bird. The intensity of this fighting cock is conveyed by Iskander in the following metaphor: "Gorjaščij, pyžij kom nenavisti letel v menja."[51]

Characterization is aided by the use of metaphor. In Trinadcatyj podvig Gerakla a doctor interupts the math lesson. "I vot vnezapnaja nadežda, svoim belosnežnom xalatom ozarivšaja nas klass, isčezla."[52] The student in the math class craning his neck in his attempt to cheat becomes a "černyj lebed'." The dancers of the Abkhazian Song and Dance Ensemble are described through a number of powerful images. One metaphor transforms them into "dvadcat' keparisovyx rycarej, kak by vyrosšix iz-pod zemli vo glave s Platonom Panculaja."[53] The cyprus knights become intoxicated with their song. Through their frenzied involvement the dancers become the warriors about whom they are singing.

While a complete statistical analysis of all Iskander's works is outside the bounds of this dissertation, a study of seven short stories and one novella is helpful in providing insight into how Iskander uses similes and metaphors. In these eight stories totalling 199 pages, there are 109 similes and fourteen metaphors. As Table I indicates, the density of these images varies. Certain works contain clusters of similes and metaphors: there are two per page in Petux; while other contain many fewer--.21 per page in Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju.

Title	Simile	Metaphor	Average per page
Petux (7p.)	12	2	2/page
Večernjaja doroga (17p.)	20	1	1.24/page
Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok (15p.)	11	2	.87/page
Deduška (30p.)	20	3	.77/page
Trinadcatyj podvig Geraklа (14p.)	4	3	.5/page
Den' Čika (78p.)	36	1	.48/page
Zapretnyi plod (9p.)	1	1	.22/page
Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju (29p.)	5	1	.21/page
Totals (199p.)	109	14	.62/page

Table I: Similes and metaphors per story.

	Tenor		Vehicle	
	Simile	Metaphor	Simile	Metaphor
People	50	8	32	6
Everyday	26	0	39	1
Nature	21	2	14	2
Animals	11	3	21	2
Abstract ideas	1	1	3	3

Table II: Sources of Tenor and Vehicle

There are five sources for Iskander's similes and metaphors. Table II gives the break down by tenor and vehicle, listing the sources in order of prevalence.

As indicated in Table II, Iskander's images are of a concrete nature. Only 2 of 123 (1.6%) have an abstract tenor. Likewise, only 6 of 123 (4.9%) have an abstract idea for the vehicle. The largest percentage (47.2%) pertain to people, specifically to enhance the characterization. In Petux 6 similes help characterize the boy narrator. 10 similes and 1 metaphor are used in Dedu$\check{s}$ka to portray Iskander's grandfather and Uncle Kjazym. Similarly in Vremja s$\check{c}$astlivyx naxodok 9 of 11 similes and 2 metaphors concern the characters. The description of the five children in Den' $\check{C}$ika contain 18 similes and 1 metaphor. Iskander uses many similes to

embelish descriptions of the world around him. 26 similes and 0 metaphors (21.1%) describe everyday objects or activities, while nature descriptions contain many similes and metaphors as well (21 similes, 2 metaphors for 18.7%). Those concerning nature are clustered in several works: Den' Čika (9 similes, 0 metaphors); Deduška (6 similes, 2 metaphors), and Večernjaja doroga (5 similes, 0 metaphors). Those similes and metaphors with animals as the tenor (11 similes, 3 metaphors for 11.4%) are used for personification of the animal. 4 similes and 2 metaphors (50% of the images in Petux) are used to personify the rooster.

Symbol

A number of works rely on the symbol as an integral part of their poetics; the symbolic implications develop theme. In Morskoj skorpion the sea scorpion is an extended symbol that pervades the entire story. The sting and inflicted pain come to symbolize the spiritual pain found in Sergej's life.

The symbol is likewise used to convey Iskander's satiric theme. The goatibex of Sozvezdie kozlotura is at the center of the story. As the campaign to promote the goatibex takes shape, the goatibex comes to symbolize the absurdity of campaigns, such as the mindless tampering with nature, ignorant of real science carried out by Lysenko.

A further use of symbol occurs in this work. Iskander also portrays the problems of modern Soviet man, symbolized as a department store mannequin. To the narrator the mannequins seem to want to prove to real people that they can be human even though they lack a soul, for they point the way to the future because they are always dressed in the most up-to-date fashions. However, Iskander also shows the inadequacy of such a Soviet man through a comparison with the dog, who is much closer to man since the dog has a soul plus a common shared humanity. The satiric use of the symbol emphasizes that wearing the latest fashions and spouting the latest political cliches are really not the things that matter in life.

Sandro iz Čegema contains a further example of the symbol conveying satire. There is a ficticious nationality found in the novel--the "Endurskij," from the root "dur" meaning fool. The Endurskijs are portrayed as the lowest people in existence and are constantly berated by Abkhazians, thus the Endurskij nationality comes to symbolize ethnic prejudice.

Iskander's descriptions are replete with similes, metaphors, and symbols. Rarely does Iskander draw on clichés; his imagery is quite striking and original. His originality comes from the choice of tenor and vehicle,

which are from widely divergent spheres, thereby arresting the reader's attention.

Personification of Animals, Nature and Other Objects

The inanimate world does not just function as the background for Iskander's prose. It is alive and participates in the action. Objects, animals, and nature take on their own personalities. Personification is an important poetic device in Iskander's works.

One of two main characters in the story Petux is a rooster. Iskander assigns to him a myriad of human emotions. He is introduced as the leader of the barnyard kingdom, a pasha "samodovol'nyj, pyšnyj i koravnyj kak vostočnyj despot."[54] The hens are his timid harem. In the course of this seven-page story, the rooster exhibits the following human emotions: hatred, arrogance, self-assurance, bravery, humiliation, indignation, patience, rage, lust, persecution, and mournful reproach.

An animal which appears in many works is the dog. When he appears in a work Iskander always describes the dog's thoughts and the reasons for his actions. In Večernjaja doroga the dog hurridly smells the boy because it is afraid it won't have time when his master arrives. The dog gives Iskander another quick check "tak proverjajut dokument, kogda uvereny čto on v porjadke."[55] As a boy, Iskander had a dog named Beločka. Her thoughts range over a number of subjects, including grooming,

ticks, and fear of the jump rope. In Den' Čika, Čik carries on several conversations with Beločka:

> -- Белочка, домой, -- сказал Чик строго, но доброжелательно.
> Белочка оглянулась, словно Чик разговаривал не с ней, а с какой-то другой собачкой. Чик давно знал все ее хитрости.
> --Кому говорят -- домой?!--Чик прибавил в голосе строгости, но оставил и нотку доброжелательности.
> "Ах, ты мне говоришь? Но мне так не хочется, Чик!" --сказала Белка взглядом и, склонив голову, застыла в позе сиротской покорности. Это было нелегко перенести, но Чик стойко держался. Он понимал, до чего ей скучно оставаться во дворе, когда все порядочные люди куда-то уходят, но брать ее с собой было нельзя.[56]

Later in the povest' Čik converses with a wolfhound puppy. The puppy grabs onto the boy's leg, as if he has a tasty bone to chew on. Their talk concerning this game covers three pages.

The horse, the donkey, and the mule belong to this same category. The dogcatcher's horse is ashamed that she works for such a master. The donkey and the mule are also capable of carrying on silent conversations. In Pervoe delo Iskander is about eight to ten years old and is attempting to catch his uncle's donkey. They "talk" as Iskander approaches with an ear of corn. Xabug's mule Arapka even narrates an entire chapter of Sandro iz Čegema entitled Rasskaz mula starogo Xabuga.

There are other animals appearing in Iskander's prose who are active participants in the story. The deer from Džansux--syn olenja ili evangelie po-čegemski of Sandro iz Čegema raise the small boy abandoned in the woods. The

mother accepts him as her own son. Sozvezdie Kozlotura has a mystical goatibex who is a finnicky male, wanting nothing to do with the female goats. In fact he hates them. All animals encountered by Iskander (pigs, cows, goats, and fish) are assigned individual personalities. The head goat--an old male with huge horns--is compared to an old white bearded astrologer. A carp, trying not to be seen by Čik as he swims by, sways along with the seaweed, convinced of his own invisiblity. Personification is extended to insects as well. The mosquitoes who land on his arm are described as they fidget trying to get acquainted with their surroundings.

Trees, rivers, the wind, and the sea are also personified. In Lov foreli v verxov'jax Kodora, the water splashes, murmurs softly, pulls at branches, becomes a hostile flood, tries to drag Iskander under with a vicious persistence, and contains a devilish force. In Rasskaz o more and Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju, following the tradition of Russian literature, Iskander describes the sea as a living being that is warm and caressing. It plays tricks on him. It holds him up. They understand each other. Yet the sea is capable of turning cold and hostile.

In Sozvezdie kozlotura the sea is Iskander's ally. The wind becomes an active particpant as well, not merely part of the background. When the narrator hesitates about

meeting a girl in Sozvezdie kozlotura the wind pushes him onward. "I vot ja podxožu, a legkij veterok duet mne v spinu, kak družeskaja ruka, podtalkivajuščaja na prestuplenie."[57]

In many works, trees, bushes, and vines come to life. The blackberry vines in Deduška want to get away from Iskander's grandfather as he chops them down. Yet they understand that it is useless to resist and finally collapse in submission. The tree is designed to teach men goodness and to show them the form their souls should take. "Krepko deržas' za zemlju, smelo podymat'sja k nebesam."[58] In Sozvezdie kozlotura a young apple tree quivers with gratitude when it is watered. The olive trees of Den' i noč' Čika remain loyal to the prince who owned them prior to the revolution and stubbornly refuse to bear fruit. Later in the story, the briars creep up the wall and spread at Nika's feet and beg her to pick one of their flowers.

Objects in Iskander's world come alive under Iskander's pen. Suitcases, files, piers, crossbeams, typewriters, chess pieces, record players, and mannequins are instilled with separate lives. A head even appears to live a life of its own. Iskander's suitcase seems to be sick from the rough plane ride in Moja milicija menja berežet. In Letnim dnem KGB files, described as of "myšinogo cveta," resist being extracted from a tightly

packed cabinet, squealing like captured animals as they are pried out.

These examples, together with the many unquoted passages from Iskander's prose, illustrate the extent to which the world of objects actively participates in the microcosm created by Iskander. Animals and the forces of nature combine with the living objects to help people Iskander's prose. Through personification Iskander adds another dimension to the rich poetic material of his works.

Oxymoron

Iskander strives for oxymoron, the striking and unusual image. A cemetery is compared to a dwarf city, where the black shadows lay on the ground like unmoving boulders. Bursting shells are linked to dandelion tops. These expressions contain unexpected, contradictory words, causing the reader to pay particular attention to the text. This device is used to heighten the comic effect. In Pod evkaliptom Iskander describes the high degree of literacy attained by the clerk at the Kengur police station. "Pisar' étot, po ego slovam, byl do togo gramotnyj, čto mog pisat' prošenija ne tol'ko rukoj, no i nogoj."[59] Describing his "crazy" uncle Kolja, Iskander uses a form of oxymoron: "kak i vse normal'nye sumasšedšie...."[60] In Pod sen'ju evkaliptov Iskander tells how he was labelled as an "Ot"javlennyj lentjaj."

The English translation entitled Something about Myself contains an additional passage, which describes an intellectual disease which Iskander calls "Chronic Mental Flatfootedness."

Through the unusual combination of terms, the reader is forced to look at a particular person, object, or emotion in a new way. Often these oxymorons produce a humorous effect by using absurd contraditions.

Ostranenie

Extended passages are used to produce ostranenie. In such instances Iskander is not merely comparing one object with something different. Instead Iskander begins by looking at an object from a totally different perspective. It is as if he were watching something through binoculars, which are turned backwards, exactly the way Čik views his home and city from up in the mountains.

In Moj pervyj školʹnyj denʹ, a neighbor Samuil asks a group of children gathered around to solve the math problem 1000 minus 999. Iskander is not yet in school but correctly determines the answer in the following manner:

> Я представил себе обе цифры в виде войска. Я представил, что на несметное войско в тысячу человек напало другое войско числом в девятьсот девяносто девять человек, и хотя нападающих было несколько меньше, но они оказались более храбрыми. Кстати, поэтому-то они и напали.
>
> Так чем же закончилась эта битва? Что осталось от войска в тысячу человек? Конечно, нападающие разгромили несметное войско, но не так, чтобы ничего не осталось, а так, чтобы остался самый предел, когда меньше уже просто невозможно. Какой же это предел?

> -- Один, -- проговорил я под напором ясновидящей силы вдохновения, глядя на последнего воина из несметной тысячи, с поникшей головой стоящего на поле боя.[61]

Another humorous episode of ostranenie occurs in Iz rasskazov o Čike. Here Čik is taken to the police station for grazing a cow within city limits. While there Čik encounters a woman engaged in some forbidden activity, the exact nature of which remains unstated. This heavily made-up woman in a bright dress is described through the eyes of an innocent child:

> Разговор был ужасно интересным, но Чик никак не мог понять, чем она занималась. Чик смутно догадывался, что ее яркое платье и ярко раскрашенное лицо имеют какое-то отношение к этим занятиям, но что это за занятия, он не мог понять.[62]

Helen Burlingame notes Iskander's use of ostranenie in Anglič̆anin s ž̆enoj i rebenkom.[63] This device is used to convey the impression that the Englishman is far from the image of a professor, almost an animal in the zoo. The foreigner is associated with a wide range of humorous images including a Viking, boxer, eagle, and maharajah. In this story the narrator is also depicted using ostranenie. The local guide refers to Iskander as a typical aborigine, a part Iskander willingly assumes. He strikes a pose "étniče skogo čučela."

Allusions

Iskander uses allusions to other works of literature and art, adding depth to his work by the implicit associations. The sources are many, including Puškin, Gogol', Lermontov, Krylov, Tolstoj, Swift, Shakespeare, Hans Christian Anderson, A. Conan Doyle, Mayne Reid, and Rembrandt.

Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil.., is the title of Iskander's short story about his crazy Uncle Kolja. The title is a direct quote of the first line of Puskin's Evgenij Onegin. This passage is chosen to allude to Iskander's feelings for his own uncle. As a youngster he too felt bored sitting with his uncle Kolja or taking him fishing or for lemon-ade, yet he respected his uncle. Iskander chose this quote for the title of this story to emphasize that Uncle Kolja, who never hurt anyone, was a man to respect. Skazka o rybake i rybke is Iskander's modern version of Puskin's fairytale.

Majakovskij is alluded to in a cynical way in Sozvezdie kozlotura. After Avtandil Avtandilovic talked to the narrator about encouraging talent in the readers rather than criticizing their poems; Iskander, fuming with rage, wants to advise them to study the classics--and especially Majakovskij.

Allusions are made to world literature as well as Russian literature. Vozmezdie is a look at a small

segment of the underworld of Suxumi. At first Cik is attracted by people with eyes like the heroes of Jack London. Their eyes are icy cold with the glint of steel and express secret agitation or a presentiment of death. Those who have such eyes belong to the criminal world. Čik is quite interested in the local criminal Motja, whose eyes of steel spark a romantic curiosity in Čik. But after the heartless way Motja treats Keropcik to extract revenge, Čik no longer feels any interest in such people.

Iskander also draws from the works of William Shakespeare for his allusions. Iskander compares his Uncle Kjazym to a disguised King Lear among beggarly Philistines. The implication here is that Kjazym has stately bearings, a sense of personal dignity. The comparison is a positive one, indicating how Iskander wants the reader to judge this character.

The world of art is an additional source for allusions. Iskander uses Rembrandt's painting The Return of the Prodigal Son to illustrate his views on art. This picture contains elements of "nedoskazannost'," which is necessary to allow the imagination to make sufficient leaps. This painting washes away the viewer's personal feelings and submerges him into the world of the painting.

Folkloric Motifs

Folk-lore is another part of the literary heritage that Iskander draws from. Iskander is familiar with tales

from many countries as well as Russia. The young hero of Detskij sad states that Ivanuska-duracok is one of his favorite heroes. In Morskoj skorpion Iskander refers to Little Red Riding Hood to help convey a particular emotional tone. The narrator compares himself to the Grey Wolf who has just eaten up Little Red Riding Hood, because he feels badly after he plays a trick on his girl friend which badly frightens her.

Folk-lore motifs are strong in Sandro iz Čegema. There are many similarities between Sandro and such heroes of folk-lore as Il'ja Muromec, Dobrynja Nikitič, Aleša Popovič, and Ivanuška-Duračok. Sandro is quite a handsome man, broadchested and narrow-hipped. He finds himself in numerous circumstances from which he extricates himself by devising outlandish schemes. It is also necessary to compare Sandro to such tricksters as the Georgian hero Saxro. As Ju. M. Sokolov points out in Russian Folklore, the heroes of folktales and anecdotes of everyday life, frequently poor peasants, use cunning, not supernatural powers to solve their problems. One well-known plot concerns a diviner, the sorcerer Zučok who hides a horse and then guesses where the "stolen" horse is. This is similar to events occuring in Sandro iz Čegema. In the chapter Djadja Sandro i konec kozlotura, Sandro helps the narrator obtain a secret document by stealing someone's hunting dog. He promises to find the Spaniel that he had

hidden away in exchange for the needed document. Again in Iqroki Sandro uses his cunning to help his friend Kolja Zarxidi to win at nards. Sandro rides his horse through the house repeatedly jumping his horse over the table where the gamblers are playing, destroying the opponent's nerves, and ruining his game.

Sandro is a famous tamada who can out-drink anyone else. In this there is a strong resemblance to the folk character Opivalo. In the chapter Xarlampo i Despina, Auntie Xrisula is called Ob"edala due to her voracious appetite. She out-eats, as well as out-talks, everyone at Xarlampo and Despina's wedding.

In Iskander's folktale Džansux--syn olenja ili evangelie po-čegemski, folk-lore motifs predominate. The story follows the pattern described by V. Propp in his book Morphology of the Folktale.[65] The mysterious birth of the hero, the death of a family member, a violated interdiction, the portrait of a beautiful woman that is capable of inspiring love, the quest, magical helpers, riddles and tasks to test the hero/seeker, plus victory overturned by the villain are all present in this work.

The characters and motifs found in Džansux--syn olenja ili evangelie po-čegemski bear many striking similarities with two Georgian fairy tales, Deer Child and Yelena the Beautiful[66] and Ajam Boglay[67]. As in the tales of Dzansux, a boy is raised by deer. Hunters capture the boy

(Deer Child) and carry him off. Deer Child goes off with the prince, who is searching for Yelena the Beautiful (the equivalent of the beautiful Gunda, who is eternally young). The Prince is consumed with desire for this maiden whom he has never met, as Džansux is after seeing the portrait of Gunda. The five-headed giant Babahanjomi carries a house on his back, as Silac does in Sandro iz Čegema. Yelena the Beautiful is locked away at home, protected by her mother and three brothers; Gunda is protected by her seven giant brothers. Suitors have certain tasks to accomplish or they are killed.

The tale Ajam Boglay too contains many of the same motifs as Džansux--syn olenja ili evangelie po-čegemski. A prince goes off with his friend Ajam Boglay in search of a beautiful girl, protected by her brothers. The brothers give the prince and his friend tasks to perform. First they must cut an iron log with a wax hatchet, which becomes magically possible after passing the maiden's hair over the blade. Similarly Džansux must split a granite block with a dagger blade--possible only after he passes a hair from Gunda's head over the blade. Second, Ajam Boglay (like Džansux) must carry a kettle of boiling water to the top of a tall tree without spilling a drop. They meet a preacher (like Silač) carrying a church on his back. This strong man agrees to help in the quest. Next Ajam Boglay meets a man with a millstone tied to each foot

while trying to chase a rabbit. The millstones keep him from running too fast. This is exactly what happens when Džansux met Skoroxod.

There are numerous other elements from folklore found in this chapter. The numbers three and seven are prevalent in Russian folklore and are to be found in Iskander's chapter. The three doves who warn Deer Child and Ajam Boglay of disasters are also present in Džansux-syn olenja ili evangelie po-čegemski. Gunda's picture is locked in a room with three locks and wrapped in three animal hides. There are three riddles to solve. Džansux has acquired seven helpers along the road to rescue Gunda from her seven giant brothers.

Further similarities can be found in Volšebnoe Kol'co which is an example of a tale in which the hero must pass a test or solve a riddle or else he dies. In Soplivyj Kozel the heads of maidens who fail are placed on the posts of the fence. In addition to the tasks for suitors the folktale The Footless Champion and the Handless Champion has the heads of the unsuccessful ones placed on the posts of the fence surrounding the house. Marko the runner is very similar to Skoroxod. Ob"edalo and Opivalo are two helpers found in Morskoj car' i Vasilisa Premudraja. In Ivan--krest'janskij syn i mužik--sam s perst', už na sem' verst', we meet a character called Obžora who helps the hero much as Ob"edalo helps Džansux.

The chapter is based on the contrast of good vs. evil, an essential element present in folk-lore. The hero and his helpers, Džansux and his seven friends, are pitted against the villains, the seven giant brothers and the prince Feodorija Prekrasnyj.

Biblical Motifs

The Bible is another important source of motifs in Iskander's prose. Biblical motifs appear in many short stories as well as in several chapters of Sandro iz Čegema. Iskander turns to the Bible for the title of Piry Valtasar. This chapter of Sandro iz Čegema takes its name from the Old Testament, the Book of Daniel, chapter five. Belshazzar held a great feast for his lords, his wives, and his concubines. As they drank from the golden vessels taken from the temple of God, they praised the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, and stone. A hand appeared and wrote on the wall of the palace, stating that God had weighed Belshazzar and found him wanting and that Belshazzar's kingdom would be divided and given to the Medes and the Persians, thus predicting the death of Belshazzar. Iskander describes a feast given by Stalin for his ministers and their wives in this chapter. The obvious message he intends for the reader is that God has judged Stalin and found him lacking, and that Stalin himself brought about the end of his own reign.

Derevo detstva contains references to the Bible. Iskander describes the tinkling of a cow bell as a "biblejskij zvuk žizni i zapustenija."[68] This age-old sound reaffirms life and its continuity with the past; it is another positive association concerning the peasant life. Iskander compares the Palmist to an ancient pilgrim, reciting the latest news from Babylon. The hoof beats of his donkey carry the echoes of kingdoms which had long since disappeared and stir up the dust of centuries gone by. Again this Biblical picture conveys a favorable impression to the reader. The passage, comparing Iskander's grandfather's feet to those of the apostles was also quoted in Chapter Two. This is another association with good, moral people, used to convey to the reader a positive attitude towards the character. Uncle Kolja is another character associated with a Biblical image. Iskander describes Uncle Kolja as using Biblical gestures when he is washing at the bath house. In a reference to St. Peter, a Gestapo agent is twice referred to as a fisher of souls in Letnim dnem.

The figure of Christ has a prominent place among the Biblical motifs in Iskander's prose. The narrator likens Kunta's foster son to a "černoglazyj vostočnyj Xristosik."[69] In Posramlenie falšivomonetčikov, Iskander uses Christ to draw an additional parallel. A drunk is lying on the ground on his back with his arms stretched out like the

innocent Jesus Christ, obviously depicted as a victim. The hooligan is Judas Iscariot who betrays Christ, in this case by going through Christ's pockets as he lies drunk on the grass. Iskander uses the image of a crucified Christ again in Moja milicija menja berežet to describe a passenger suffering from air sickness.

Biblical motifs are also used for contrast, to make a point clearer. Moj kumir draws a reverse analogy concerning the vision of Christ walking on the water. Iskander states that a miracle, as the Grand Inquisitor states, is charlatanism. Since as the son of God, Christ risked nothing and this miracle was performed merely to lure people into religion. However when Jura ran across a swaying cross-beam, it was a true heroic feat, a man-made miracle. This was a true contest between fear and courage.

Biblical motifs predominate in Džansux--syn olenja ili evangelie po-čegemski. The chapter title "evangelie po-čegemski" immediately alerts the reader to these motifs. Many parallels can be drawn between Džansux and Christ (as well as other religious prophets--e.g. Buddha and Mohammed). Džansux too is called a prophet. People come from all over Abkhazia to ask Džansux's advice on all matters just as they flocked to Christ.

In addition to those who praised Christ, the Pharisees came and asked questions to try to discredit Christ. The

wine merchant who dilutes his wine and the prince who sells slaves parallel the Philistines in challenging Dž̌ansux.

Dž̌ansux gathers "helpers" along the road in the manner of Christ choosing his disciples. Ob"edalo, Opivalo, and the rest readily throw down what they are doing and follow Dž̌ansux, as Simon Peter and Andrew threw down their fishing nets. During the course of their journey, Dž̌ansux, like Christ, instructs his followers by telling them parables. When they are unable to interpret their significance, Dž̌ansux explains the meaning:

> Они пошли дальше по дороге и Джансух им рассказывал поучительные истории, чтобы они мудрели на ходу, а также делал попутные замечания, разглядывая окружающук природу.[70]

His parables concerning three men each with a loaf of bread, a man attacked by a bandit, three pickpockets, slavery, and a sinking ship emphasize man's spiritual needs.

Further parallels to Christ exist concerning Dž̌ansux's betrayal and death. The King Feodorija Prekrasnyj spreads rumors about Dž̌ansux, much as the high priests spread lies about Christ. Further paralleling the actions of the high priests, the king uses treachery to convince an archer to shoot Dž̌ansux for the "Good of Abkhazia." Thus Dž̌ansux becomes a martyr for the cause of truth.

Greco-Roman Motifs

Iskander's prose contains many motifs from ancient Greek and Roman history and mythology. Sometimes this is done for comic effect. In Petux Iskander likens himself to a Roman legionary using his shield for protection when he is fighting off the rooster with a chair. Poslednij xiromant contains a humorous scene which compares the two downed German pilots, covered with feathers, with Daedalus and Icarus after their unsuccessful flight. A reference to "the heel of Achilles" is used in a facitious passage on the stimulation of spiritual activity in man. The ancient Greeks, according to Iskander in Pod sen'ju evkaliptov, believed that the soul is located in a person's heel from whence comes the expression "heel of Achilles." the great distance between the soul and the brain caused "Chronic Mental Flatfootedness."

As he has used titles from the opening line of Evgenij Onegin, folk-lore, and the Bible, Iskander turns to Greek mythology for the title of the short story Trinadcatyj podvig Gerakla. The story concerns Iskander's Math teacher, a Greek named Xarlampij Digenovič. This teacher is compared to Pythagoras in the humorous introduction to the story which informs the reader about the perfection of Pythagoras' pants. It is pointed out one fourth of the way into the story that Xarlampij Diogenovič would fill in extra time by telling one of Aesop's fables or a story

from Greek mythology. At the end of this story the significance of the alteration of the title from the twelve labors of Hercules becomes clear. Since Iskander does not have his math problem solved, he uses subterfuge to avoid being called on. Xarlampij Diogenovič is aware of this and singles Iskander out for derisive humor. Starting out as if he were talking about Greek mythology, he lays a trap for the guilty person, explaining how even though there were only twelve labors of Hercules, a young man decided to revise Greek mythology and perform a thirteenth labor. Once everyone thinks about the fultility of this effort, he closes the trap:

> -- Геракл совершил свои подвиги, как храбец. А этот молодой человек совершил свой подвиг из трусости... -- Харлампий Диогенович задумался и прибавил: -- Мы сейчас узнаем, во имя чего он совершил свой подвиг...
>
> Щелк! На этот раз только одна бусина упала с правой стороны на левую. Он ее резко подтолкнул пальцем. Она как-то нехорошо упала. Лучше бы упали две, как раньше, чем одна такая.
>
> Я почувствовал, что в воздухе запахло какой-то опасностью. Как будто не бусина щелкнула, а захлопнулся маленький капканчик в руках Харлампия Диогеновича.[71]

Moj kumir contains another reference to Hercules. Jura Stavrakidi is called a young Hercules, indicating the heroic stature he had attained in the eyes of the young narrator. Other references to Hercules occur in Den' i noč' Čika and Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok, always with a positive connotation.

An extended reference occurs in the chapter Bitva na Kodore ili Derevjannyj bronovik.... As the term "derevjannyj bronovik" suggests, this chapter is a parody of the Greek myth about the Trojan wooden horse. Instead of the Greeks versus the Trojans, we find the Mensheviks against the Bolsheviks. The wooden horse used to get inside the gates of Troy is replaced by a wooden armoured car employed by the Mensheviks to cross the bridge into Bolshevik territory. They built the armoured car under the strictest secrecy inside a heavily guarded barn. Just as Laocoon tries to warn the Trojans not to accept the Greecian gift, Sandro tries to warn the Bolsheviks about the Menshevik secret weapon.

Satire

Almost all of Iskander's works are satirical. Their prime target is man--frequently the narrator himself--and his follies and foibles. He frequently states that the writer does not need to speak of serious matters in a serious tone. Through satire the serious becomes even more serious. Thus Iskander's satire fulfills one major requirment, as David Worcester observes, that of "an aim, a preconceived purpose: to instill a given set of emotions or opinions into its reader."[72]

While satire is present in most all of Iskander's works, at times its presence is limited to only sections of a story, such as in Večernjaja doroga. At other times,

the satire is sustained throughout the whole work, as in Sozvezdie kozlotura and Sandro iz Čegema.

The targets of Iskander's satire are many, reflecting a wide spectrum: crime, alcoholism, prostitution, bribery, shortages, pornography, propaganda, indoctrination of children, higher education, suicide, anti-religious activities, campaigns, ethnic prejudice, collectivization, resettlement of nations, the communist view of the Civil War, Stalin, the purges, Hitler, and the Nazis.

The purpose of satire is to attack these ills. Yet the attack made is not always a direct one. Sometimes Iskander softens the blow in such a way that the reader is not antagonized, but amused while he also agrees with the author's criticism of various subjects. This is particularly true in stories of his childhood where the narrator is a child. In Sozvezdie kozlotura, Sandro iz Čegema, and Kroliki i udavy, however, the satire is more poignant and the attack is more penetrating. Iskander's satiric tone is more pointed in the Ardis editions of Sandro iz Čegema.[73]

In order to convey his satiric message to the reader, Iskander brings into play all the poetic devices mentioned above: simile, metaphor, symbol, ostranenie, digression, narration, manipulation of viewpoint, dialogues of misunderstanding, slang, cliché, parody, characterization,

and personification. Some additional devices (grotesque, hyperbole, irony, allegory, and anticlimax, among others) are also used.

Narrator

The narrator is of vital importance in a satiric work for he sets the tone. He is often a simple, good-natured fellow, an innocent observer, who is confiding in the reader. At times, the mood of a satire is one of joint conspiracy between the narrator and the reader. The narrator chats with the reader, presenting himself as a simple, gullible character totally unable to deceive others. This is an exact description of the young journalist who narrates many of Iskander's works. It also applies to the narrator of the childhood stories. The naive journalist in Sozvezdie kozlotura draws the comparison between true poetry and the prize winning poem of the kozlotur:

Жил гордый тур в горах Кавказа.
По нем турицы сохли все,
Но он мечтал о желтоглазой,
О милой маленькой козе.

Но отвергали злые люди,
Пролить пытаясь его кровь,
Его альпийскую, по сути,
Высокогорную любовь.

Тур уходил за перевалы,
Колючки жесткие грызя,
Его теснили феодалы,
Мелкопоместные князья.

Паленой шерстью дело пахло,
А также пахло шашлыком...
А козочка в долине чахла
В разлуке с гордым женихом.

И только в наши дни впервые
Нашелся добрый чародей,
Что снял преграды видовые
Рукой мичуринской своей.

И с туром козочка любовно
Сплела рога под звон чонгур.
От этой ласки безусловно
Родился первый козлотур.

В нем навсегда, как говорится,
Соединились две черты:
Прыгучесть славного альпийца
И домовитый нрав козы.

Назло любому самодуру
Теперь мы славим на века
Не только мясо козлотура,
Но и прекрасные рога.[74]

This poem, instead of praising the kozlotur, in reality satirizes Soviet life. The poem begins in a high, elevated style depicting the great love between the ibex and the goat. The two animals are personified through such words as "soxli," "čaxla," and "mečtal." But Iskander turns from thoughts of love and states: "Palenoj šerst'ju delo paxlo/ A takze paxlo šašlykom..." The deal [campaign] smells of something bad. The "feodaly," "melkopomestnye knjaz'ja," and "samodur"--are unfavorable terms which could refer to government bureaucrats. The

absurd, comic aspect is highlighted by numerous instances of play on words and incongruous lexica (e.g. "vysokogornuju ljubov'," "domovityj nrav," "zvon Čongur"). The poem is thus more than the parody of Soviet poetry the narrator presents it to be. In reality Iskander presents the reader with a parody of contemporary Soviet life, leaving it to the reader to judge its worth.

The narrator of the stories of his childhood and of Čik and Remzik manipulates the point of view so that the reader sees the problems of adult life from the viewpoint of an innocent child. Čik ponders the arrest of Nika's father, Pata Pataraja, during the purges. Through ostranenie, Iskander uses Čik's childish vision to expose the senselessness of this arrest. To Čik Pataraja is innocent, for it is impossible to dance on an over-turned wineglass and watch out for spies among the leaders at the same time. It would take all Pata Pataraj's skill and attention just to perform such a difficult feat:

> Чик очень долго старался представить, как это можно танцевать на перевернутой рюмке. В конце концов он решил, что отец Ники танцевал на перевернутой рюмке, стоя на большом пальце одной ноги и приподняв вторую. Это было похоже не рисунок из замечательной книги "История гражданской войны". Чик эту книгу много раз листал. Там был нарисован дореволюционный крестьянин, который одной ногой стоял на своей земле, а другую держал в воздухе, потому что своей земли у него было так мало, что некуда было поставить вторую ногу. Чик через этот рисунок почему-то легко представил Пата Патарая, танцующего на перевернутой рюмке. Разумеется, в отличие от лохматого, оборванного крестьянина,

> он его представлял одетого в черкеску и в азиатские сапоги.[75]

The boy's lack of understanding highlights the illogical basis of each problem. The scale of values the boy creates is at odds with that of the offical world, exposing the problem but not resolving it. The boy's questions must be answered by the reader.

Hyperbole

Several critics have noted that Sozvezdie Kozlotura is built on an extended hyperbole in the same manner as Mertvye dušI by Gogol'. At the same time, IsKander's "very important person" is similar to Gogol's Inspector General. In Sozvezdie Kozlotura one small article about the goatibex is noticed by an important official. His comments in turn touch off a whirlwind campaign to promote it. In addition to hailing the goatibex as the answer to many agricultural problems, it is even suggested that the goatibex compete in the Olympics, that it be used as a weapon for antireligious propaganda, and that there should be a competition with the state of Iowa to see who is better at raising the goatibex. Both IsKander and Gogol' satirize "the bureaucratic mentality which hangs on every word of the very important person."[76] Sozvezdie Kozlotura and Mertvye dušI are both loose, rambling narratives which contain lyrical digressions. The lyrical digressions in Sozvezdie Kozlotura serve to highlight the emptiness of

the exaggerated bureaucratic world of the newspaper in contrast to the freshness of village life.

Grotesque

Grotesque is another device Iskander uses in Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil. It satirizes the indoctrination of young children. Grotesque gains its satiric effect by distorting reality, yet passing it off as serious, not preposterous. The boy narrator's actions, clearly intended by Iskander to be abnormal, are treated seriously. His head is filled with the stories of young pioneers unmasking German spies. But this propaganda is redirected against someone totally incapable of espionage, his crazy Uncle Kolja. As the boy plays out the scene he has envisioned, his speech abounds with distortions of clichés found in propaganda aimed at the enemies of the people: "Pioner razoblačaet špiona. Deti, bud'te bditel'nymi!" "Železnyj čelovek." "Vy neploxo sygral svoj rol', no i my ne dremali." "Uvilivaet, šel'ma." "Ni s mesta!" "Dom oceplen!" "Dobrovol'noe priznanie oblegčit vašu učasti'!" "Nazovite soobščnikov!"

Irony

Iskander uses irony to mask the intended meaning behind the reality described. The literal meaning of a statement is actually the opposite of that intended. One way to achieve irony is to speak words of praise to imply blame.

The autobiography of the mule is a perfect tool for irony. A "dumb" animal describes his master Xabug and the world from a mule's limited point of view. This point of view succeeds because Arapka is always believeable as a mule; that is, Iskander never allows Arapka to become a man, but maintains a clear animal viewpoint throughout the chapter. Through his comments, Arapka creates his own standard to judge the world. He praises the kolkhoz workers for their lack of enthusiasm when they drive the animals out of the corn fields. They are much kinder than the independent peasants. Iskander uses this "dumb" animal to point out the discrepancies that exist between collective farms and independent farmers. The reader must analyze the information, correcting for the mistakes of an unreliable, naive commentator and turn the praise into blame. By discovering the irony, the inversion of meaning, intended by Iskander, the reader actively participates in the story. This is but one example of the ironic undercurrents that flow beneath the surface of Iskander's prose, complicating the structure of the work.

In Djadja Sandro i ego ljubimec one of the characters speaks ironically and yet sincerely about the troubles Stalin has compared to the average citizen, using a vacation trip to illustrate his point. The major problem is the three days advance notice necessary for the secret service. In those three days Stalin could lose the desire

to go or the weather could turn bad. "A nekotorye dumajut--vožd'jam legko!... Dumajut--kuda xočes' ezžaj, čto xočes' kušaj... Vse besplatno..."[77] Later in this passage, the same character adds that no one treated the boys of the Secret Service better than Stalin did. There are no contradictory voices heard in the audience. The reader is left to correct this praise based on his knowledge of Stalin.

Allegory

The povest' Kroliki i udavy is a satirical allegory. Here Iskander turns to the fable, set in long ago Africa, describing two animal kingdoms--the rabbit's and the boa constrictor's. The animals are given allegorical names, indicating a particular personality trait or place in society. In accord with the principles of allegory, each animal is only given one human trait to represent. Naxodčivyj ilustrates Greed. He numbers among the rabbits Stremjaščiesja k Stolu, who want to become Dopuščennye k Stolu. He is willing to betray his long time rival Zadumavšiesja to get there. Yet even while this parallel with human behavior is plain to see, the rabbits always remain rabbits; they do not become men. They worry about boa constrictors, raid gardens for peas, carrots and beans, receive rewards of cabbage leaves, and desire the promised "Cvetnaja kapusta"--a hint at the promised communist society that is always just a little bit farther

down the road. Iskander controls the point of view so that the story is always told from the aspect of one of the animals--be it rabbit, boa constrictor, or monkey. The story operates successfully on the two levels simultaneously.

While each animal focuses on one particular human trait, the focus of the work is on the ills of society. Kroliki i udavy is a political satire. The rabbit kingdom is quite a complex social structure containing many similarities pointing to Soviet society. Iskander uses it to study the effects of power and of betrayal: growing dissatisfaction and alcoholism. The Boa constrictor symbolizes the "foreign threat" the government constantly warns the public about. However, Iskander does not instruct the reader as to the moral of his tale. The moral is left suspended in the povest'.

Black Comedy

Iskander turns to black comedy to complete Stalin's portrait. The black comedy is concentrated in three major sections of Sandro iz Čegema [Ardis edition]. These scenes exhibit marked disillusionment and cynicism, particularly the banquet scene in Piry Valtasara. This banquet has many similarities with the late night party Stalin organizes in the story by Vladimir Voinovič, "A Circle of Friends." In both satiric works, Stalin is

shown to be a cruel, paranoid man, who distrusts even his closest advisors and friends.

This black comedy has an antithetical structure, presenting the reader with a contradictory portrait of the great leader. On the one hand, Stalin receives the respect and praise of all in attendance at the banquet. He is a powerful, admirable figure, who can be generous and warm. Yet on the other hand, there is an ominous undercurrent running through the text, sometimes expressed more openly, sometimes only hinted at.

Stalin's features supply important clues to his personality. All the traits mentioned add to the impression that Stalin is an emotionally unbalanced individual. When Sandro sees Stalin for the first time, he notes that Stalin has a withered arm like Kolčerukij. It is one hint that all is not quite right; he is a somewhat deformed individual. Stalin's eyes are important to complete the portrait. Early in the banquet Sandro notes the similarity between the oily glitter of Stalin's boots and the oily glitter of his dark eyes. On numerous occasions during the dinner, Stalin's shining, flashing eyes suddenly go cold. As his moods quickly swing from happiness to paranoia, Stalin's eyes become opaque and withdrawn--another indication of an unhealthy individual. Stalin's behavior reinforces the picture of an unbalanced man who purposefully torments Kalinin, Beria, Beria's

wife, and LaKoba. In one instance he deliberately lets the flame get to Kalinin's fingers before lighting his pipe. In a William Tell incident, Stalin has LaKoba shoot eggs off the cook's head for entertainment.

The undercurrent of danger, connected with Sandro, is present throughout the chapter. Each time Sandro comes to Stalin's attention, an uneasy shadow appears in Stalin's eyes. The sinister implications hinted at are not explained until after the dance troupe has left the banquet. On the way home the cars are stopped by goats blocking the road. This encounter triggers Sandro's memory. As a young boy, he had met a man Sandro now recognizes as Stalin. This man, having killed everyone else off, was the last member of a gang of four who robbed a steamboat. Stalin is no longer just mentally unbalanced; he is a criminal directly linked with premeditated murder. This completes Stalin's portrait. There has been no outward moral judgment of Stalin up to this point. This seems to tip the scales heavily against Stalin. The concluding paragraph of the chapter reinforces this implication:

> Сам факт, что он умер своей смертью, если, конечно, он умер своей смертью, меня лично наталкивает на религиозную мысль, что Бог затребовал папку с его делами к себе, чтобы самому судить его высшим судом и самому казнить его высшей казнью.[78]

As the chapter progresses, Stalin's portrait grows worse.

Each item of praise presented at the beginning of the chapter is contradicted. Even the episodes of comic relief inserted into the story emphasize the sick nature of Stalin's sense of humor, leaving the reader with a highly cynical picture of Stalin.

Dream

The dream is an important device used to reveal a character's true inner self. A dream sequence, much like the dream in Vojnović's story, is embedded in the chapter Piry Valtasara. The beginning of the recurring dream shows Stalin as he wishes others to see him: a simple farmer named Džugašvili, who refused to become the sovereign of all Russia because he did not want to spill the blood of the peasants. Yet his true personality intrudes into the pleasant vision, halting it abruptly. Upon waking, he always blames his mother for an incident occurring during his childhood when two men laughed obscenely at her. The animosity towards his mother and his inability to forgive her for an incident in which she is blameless emphasize his abnormal psychology. The ending of the dream destroys the positive image, an illusion, created at the start of the dream.

Anticlimax

On many occasions, the tone of Iskander's prose descends from a high level to a less exalted, even irreverent, tone. These cases of anticlimax release built

up tension at the same time that they underscore the absurdity of events. In the chapter Djadja Sandro i ego ljubimec, the effect is quite comic as well as satiric. When Sandro is drying off after stunning fish with dynamite for Stalin, he hears noises in the bushes. The fear of a wild bear is replaced by a new fear when he learns that it is a Secret Service agent. However, the fear dissipates immediately and turns into burlesque, for the agent brings a gift from Stalin--a pair of long underwear. Iskander switches to more serious subjects once again--the deportation of ethnic groups. Sandro interprets the gift as an indication that Stalin has decided against deporting the Abkhazians. The tone switches from serious to irreverent burlesque when Sandro is reminded of the dangerous situation that he was in:

> -- Если бы не кальсоны Сталина, может, и наложил бы, -- сквозь общий хохот закричал Тенгиз, -- а так испугался, что еще хуже будет.
> -- Вас же, засранцев, спас от выселения, и вы же надо мной смеетесь! -- крикнул дяди Сандро, сам еле сдерживаясь от смеха.[79]

These matters lose their serious, sinister side and are now ludicrous, laughable topics.

Names

Many characters in Iskander's works come to be called by their nicknames. These "govorjaščie imena" or "speaking names" are epithets, in the manner of Homer, which describe a person's salient feature, causing the

name to be disembled and become concealed in speech. Šaaban Larba is known as Kolčerukij (Withered-arm); the palmist is only known as Xiromant; Iskander's crazy uncle is Sumasšedšij djadja Kolja. The tailor Suren is noted for his all consuming desire to become rich and is therefore called Bogatyj Portnoj.

All the animals in the allegory Kroliki i udavy have "speaking names" indicating a particular personality trait or place in society. Among the rabbits are: Korol', Koroleva, Zadumavšijsja, Pervaja Vdova, Naxodčivyj, Glavnyj Učenyj, Staryj Mudryj Krolik, Vozžaždavšij, Poet, Kaznačej, and Načal'nik Oxrany. Among the snakes there are: Velikij Piton, Molodoj udav (whose name changes to Pustynnik following his exile), Kosoj, and Korotyška. The rabbits also fall into groups: Dopuščennye k Stolu and Stremjaščiesja k Stolu. It is easy to see "Stol" as the rabbit equivalent of the Communist Party for all manner of privileges go with this rank.

Many instances of "speaking names" occur in Sandro iz Čegema. This is particularly true in the chapter Džansux--syn olenja ili evangelie po-čegemski. All Džansux's helpers have names drawn from folk-lore which indicate their magic powers: Ob"edalo, Opivalo, Sluxač, Silač, Skoroxod, Lovkač, and Ostroglaz. The old woman who races against Skoroxod is named Strausinaja Noga. Satire is present in the names associated with the

evil Prince Kobzač. When he ascends to the throne, Kobzac assumes the pretentious name Feodorij Prekrasnyj; however, the people come to call him Tykvogolovyj Krasovčik [Pumpkinheaded Prettyboy], or simply Tykvogolovyj.

The satire implicit in the names is clearest in the chapter Xarlampo i Despina. A Čegemian myth about Lenin and Stalin is embedded in this love story. Lenin is thought to be the greatest abrek of all times. In the myth he is called "Tot, čto Xotel Xorošego, no ne Uspel." On the other hand, Stalin is referred to by his standard nickname "Bol'ševusyj." The satire becomes quite explicit when Stalin is called "Vurdalak vypivšij našu krov'." Through the use of names Iskander places the two leaders at opposite ends of the spectrum.

Conclusion

In Iskander's prose we find a remarkable range of tone. His works contain lyrical descriptions, humorous passages, bureaucratic and journalistic jargon, slang, and non-Russian words. Language is carefully chosen for a number of purposes: to set the mood, to aid characterization, and to achieve comic effect. The lyrical descriptions of nature, while setting a peaceful tone, are realistically portrayed, including colors, sounds, smells, and textures, as well as the names of the trees, bushes, flowers, birds, and fish. It is here that Iskander's prose at times achieves a musical quality. In

addition, Iskander uses dialogues of misunderstanding and parodies of bureaucratic phraseology to convey satire.

Not limiting himself to one set style, Iskander varies his narrative mode. Most frequently, the narrator is an adult, closely identified with Iskander. This narrator often describes his childhood. Using ostranenie, adult problems are examined from a child's perspective. In a number of other works, Iskander chooses third person narration. In this case, the point of view is controlled. To maintain and build suspense, the reader is allowed to learn about certain matters. Other events are hidden from him. The reader may see things from one point of view; or the view may shift within a work to allow the reader to see events from several perspectives.

Digressions, foreshadowing, and retardation of the plot are important compositional devises adding to the structural complexity of a work. Such elements build an emotional undercurrent felt below the surface of the text, enriching it. While digressions are usually well integrated into a work, in certain instances Iskander fails to control them.

Characterization is a major strength of Iskander's poetics. The people of Abkhazia are portrayed in a manner true to life. Imagery, individualized speech, behavior, and thoughts are used to make each person a memorable individual.

Iskander's prose is rich in imagery. The average is as high as two similies and metaphors per page in Dedu$ka. Similes and metaphors are used extensively throughout his works to set the mood (lyrical, humorous, or satiric), to make an action or emotion more explicit or concrete, to characterize, and to personify. Tenor and vehicle are often from very different areas, creating a striking image. They are predominantly concrete. In the sample 98.4% of the tenors and 95.1% of the vehicles are of a concrete nature. They are most frequently used to aid characterization (47.2% in the sample survey). While statistically smaller in number (11.4%), similes and metaphors are important for the personification of animals. Symbols are well integrated into the fabric of the text to develop Iskander's theme, which is frequently satiric.

Iskander does not distinguish between the animate and inanimate world, as is indicated by the numerous occasions of personification in his prose. Animals, plants, and objects all take on lives of their own.

Ostranenie is achieved by looking at the world through the eyes of a preadolescent boy. Iskander employs it for comic and satiric effect and to examine various problems of the Soviet way of life.

Iskander adds depth to his prose by using literary allusions and by drawing on motifs from folk-lore, the

Bible, and Greco-Roman history and mythology. These allusions are used to provide titles of works, to supply comic effect, to create a particular atmosphere or emotional tone, and to characterize.

Most of Iskander's works are satiric. In addition to those devices already mentioned, Iskander employs a number of additional devices to help develop his satire: grotesque, hyperbole, irony, allegory, black comedy, dreams, anticlimax, and "speaking names." Using these devices Iskander exposes major ills of Soviet society: crime, alcoholism, bribery, propaganda, indoctrination of children, campaigns, collectivization, resettlement of nations, and the purges, among others. These attacks are not usually direct, but are softened to avoid alienating the reader. The attitude of the narrator is particularly important in order to accomplish this.

Iskander is a talanted writer, ever ready to employ literary devices and styles in original ways. His diversity enables him to draw upon a wide variety of techniques, selecting the right device to achieve the intended result.

Notes

[1] F. Iskander, Deduška, in his Pervoe delo, 2nd ed. (Moscow: "Detskaja literatura," 1978), p. 92.

[2] F. Iskander, Večernjaja doroga, in his Pervoe delo (Moscow: "Detskaja literatura," 1978), p. 65.

[3]F. Iskander, Sozvezdie kozlotura, in his Derevo detstva (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel',' 1970), p. 332.

[4]Ibid., p. 330.

[5]F. Iskander, Kolčerukij, in his Derevo detstva (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel',' 1970), pp. 41-42.

[6]F. Iskander, Sandro iz Čegema, novye glavy (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981), p. 181.

[7]Ibid., p. 184.

[8]Ibid.

[9]F. Iskander, Angličanin s ženoj i rebenkom, in his Derevo detstva (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel',' 1970) p. 147.

[10]Sandro iz Čegema, novye glavy, p. 100.

[11]Ibid., p. 108.

[12]Sozvezdie kozlotura, p. 307.

[13]F. Iskander, Sandro iz Čegema (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1979) p. 85.

[14]Sandro iz Čegema. novye glavy, p. 39.

[15]Ibid., p. 67.

[16]Sozvezdie kozlotura, p. 304.

[17]F. Iskander, Neblagodarnyj prestupnik, in his Zapretnyj plod (Moscow: "Molodaja gvardija," 1966), pp. 246-47.

[18]Sandro iz Čegema, [Ardis ed.], p. 522.

[19]Ibid., p. 526.

[20]F. Iskander, Remzik, Junost', No. 9 (1974), p. 22.

[21]Sozvezdie kozlotura, p. 290.

[22]Sandro iz Čegema, [Ardis ed.], p. 314.

[23]F. Iskander, Trinadcatyj podvig Gerakla, in his Pervoe delo (Moscow: "Detskaja literatura," 1978), p. 32.

[24] F. Iskander, Noč' i den' Čika, in his Zaščita Čika (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel'," 1983), p. 343.

[25] Ibid., p.348.

[26] F. Iskander, Večernjaja doroga, in his Pervoe delo (Moscow: Detskaja literatura," 1978), p. 67.

[27] Večernjaja doroga, p. 64.

[28] Noč' i den' Čika, p. 359-60.

[29] F. Iskander, Petux, in his Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok (Moscow: "Molodaja gvardija," 1973), p. 4.

[30] Sandro iz Čegema, [Ardis ed.], p. 201.

[31] Deduška, p. 93.

[32] F. Iskander, Pod Sen'ju evkaliptov, Smena, XLVI, No. 19 (1969), 14.

[33] F. Iskander, V strane Čudes, in his Sandro iz Čegema (Moscow: "Sovetskij pisatel'," 1977) p. 233.

[34] Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju, p. 19.

[35] Noč' i den' Čika, p. 313.

[36] Sozvezdie kozlotura, p. 341.

[37] Sandro iz Čegema, [Ardis ed.], p. 299.

[38] Noč' i den' Čika, p.

[39] Deduška, p. 94.

[40] Petux, p. 7.

[41] Pod sen'ju évkaliptov, p. 15.

[42] Petux, p. 4.

[43] V strane čudes, p. 248-49.

[44] Noč' i den' Čika, p. 341.

[45] Ibid., p. 346.

[46] Večernjaja doroga, p. 62.

[47] Čaepitie i ljubov' k morju, p. 9.

[48]Večernjaja doroga, p. 69.

[49]F. Iskander, Ne vse tak prosto, Smena, XLV, No. 6 (1968), 26.

[50]Zapretnyj plod, p. 46.

[51]Petux, p. 7.

[52]Trinadcatyj podvig Gerakla, p. 28.

[53]Sandro iz Čegema, [Ardis ed.], p. 198.

[54]Petux, p. 5.

[55]Večernjajaj doroga, p. 69.

[56]F. Iskander, Den' Čika, in his Pervoe delo (Mosocw: "Detskaja literatura," 1978), pp. 142-43.

[57]Sozvezdie kozlotura, p. 343.

[58]F. Iskander, Derevo detstva, Naš sovremennik, No. 1 (1977), p. 27.

[59]F. Iskander, Pod évkaliptom, Nedelja, No. 49 (1974), p. 6.

[60]F. Iskander, Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil, in his Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok (Moscow: "Molodaja gvardija," 1973), p. 31.

[61]F. Iskander, Moj pervyj škol'nyj den', in his Vremja sčastlivyx naxodok (Moscow: "Molodaja gvardija," 1973) p. 45.

[62]F. Iskander, Iz rasskazov o Čike, Junost', No. 5 (1977), p. 37.

[63]Helen P. Burlingame, "The Prose of Fazil Iskander," Russian Literature Triquarterly, No. 14 (1976), pp. 123-65.

[64]Ju. M. Sokolov, Russian Folklore, trans. by Catherine Ruth Smith (Matbow, Penn.: Folklore Associates, 1966).

[65]V. Propp, Morphology of the Folktale (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics, 1958).

[66] Folk Tales From Russian Lands, selected and translated by Irena Zheleznova (New York: Dover, 1969) pp. 153-69.

[67] Yes and No Stories: A Book of Georgian Folk Tales [collected] by George and Helen Papasvily, 1st ed. (New York: Harper, 1946) pp. 83-103.

[68] Sandro iz Čegema, [Ardis ed.], p. 600.

[69] Ibid., p. 601.

[70] Sandro iz Čegema; novye glavy, p. 182.

[71] Trinadcatyj podvig Geraкla, p. 34.

[72] David Worcester, The Art of Satire (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960) p. 8.

[73] The complete edition of Sandro iz Čegema has not been published in the Soviet Union. The 1977 edition published by Sovetskij pisatel' consists of only eight chapters. There are six other chapters that have been published in the Soviet Union only as separate short stories. This totals fourteen chapters that the Soviet audience is aware of. In contrast the two volumes of the Ardis editon contain twenty one chapters in all. Thus there are seven entire chapters that have not been published in the Soviet Union. These chapters are: Istorija molel'nogo dereva, Piry Valtasara, Rasskaz mula starogo Xabuga, Djadja Sandro i konec Kozlotura, Pastux Maxaz, and Kutež trex knjazej v zelenom dvorike. It is here that one finds the most direct criticism of collectivization, government bureaucrarcy and privilege, Stalin, and even the excessive praise of Lenin.

There are additional differences between the Soviet and U.S. versions of the novel. The Ardis edition contains numerous passages which have been expanded and/or where the wording has been changed. On many occasions this is to intensify the satire of the section, to make it more explicit. Some chapters appearing in the Soviet edition are considerably shorter than those in the Ardis edition. There are passages throughout the novel that do not appear in the Soviet edition, yet they are included in the Ardis edition. These passages and the many others found throughout the novel add considerably to the satiric content of Sandro iz Čegema.

[74] Sozvezdie Kozlotura, pp. 338-39.

[75] Noč i den' Čika, pp. 29

[76]Burlingame, p. 140.

[77]Sandro iz Čegema, [Ardis ed.], pp. 296.

[78]Ibid., p. 229.

[79]Ibid., p. 307.

Chapter Four: Criticism

Fazil' Iskander's prose has had a very good reception by the critics both inside and outside the Soviet Union. Although he is also a poet, critics consider Iskander's prose to be his most significant contribution to literature. Negative response to his works is almost non-existant. Iskander is known for his humorous approach to life, his gentle satire, and the regional flavor of his prose.

Most of Iskander's prose concerns his native Abkhazia. Many critics observe that it is Iskander's desire to present the Abkhazian way of life through his characters. These pictures of Abkhazia transcend national boundaries and are equally understandable to foreign readers. This is one major theme in Iskander's prose. Critics also point out that Iskander's childhood and adult life are two additional major themes found in his prose.

As several critics have noted the focus of Iskander's prose is on people and their interrelationships and that characterization is one of Iskander's strengths. In particular, the young narrator of many works is noted for his excellent portrayal. In their opinion, this is an accurate psychological portrait of an insightful

adolescent boy, very similar to the young heroes of Tolstoj, Gorkij, and Mark Twain.

Critics also discuss the poetic devices used by Iskander. These include narrative voice, digressions, imagery, and language. Among the satiric devises there are hyperbole, grotesque, parody, and caricature.

Much of the criticism focuses on four works in particular, noting their strengths and weaknesses. These four (Sozvezdie kozlotura, Den' i noč' Čika, Morskoj skorpion, and Sandro iz Čegema) are anlayzed in some detail.

In addition to the major critical response to Iskander, this chapter contains Iskander's own perception of literature and the world. Iskander has written reviews of works by other authors and articles about literature. These articles offer valuable insight into Iskander the writer.

Iskander on Literature

Iskander presents a good overview of his Weltanschauung and opinion of literature in the article "Sometimes Losses are More Valuable than Gains."[1] In this article, Iskander states that he believes good is stronger than evil. This is the same conflict which Iskander portrays in his prose. A person will inevitably encounter problems during the course of his life, yet these episodes enrich a person spiritually. The more intellectually

developed a person is, the more successfully he is able to struggle against evil. Self-perfection is the cornerstone of the meaning of life in Iskander's opinion. Today man is not so much overpowered by some great evil as he is by trifles. Iskander stresses the value of humor, which he defines as a ray of love for mankind. Humor is incomprehensible if it lacks this love. Through humor one is able to fight against the trifles of life and, probably, great evil.

Good literature, such as the works of Tolstoj and Dostoevskij, never smooths out the conflicts of life but instead makes them more acute. This literature will leave a deep imprint on man's soul.

The search for truth is equally important. It is this aspect of Tolstoj's writing that Iskander singles out for admiration. In "O novatortstve, banal'nyx istinax i citatax"[2] Iskander analyzes Tolstoj's creative pathos, or "plastika." In his works, Tolstoj expresses the fact that each human action is a movement toward truth or away from truth. This belief compelled Tolstoj to find infinite ties of one thought or action with those of another. These endless signals need to be examined in order to understand and distinguish a lie from the truth. This distinction between a lie and the truth is also vitally important to Iskander. His youthful narrator is concerned with this distinction on several occasions. In Tolstoj's

works, this results in a slowing down of the action due to the multiple staging of the construction of images, giving the impression of psychological exhaustion.

Bunin is another writer analyzed by Iskander. He characterizes Bunin as devoted to the steadfast, the immovable, the eternal, that which is frozen by time itself, and that one recurring trait found in Bunin's works is the mummification of everything loved. Bunin attempts to preserve life from time, to create images which are hard as diamonds. In much the same way in his own works, Iskander is trying to capture forever the essence of his beloved Abkhazia. The examples of Tolstoj and Bunin illustrate that the means each writer uses are the distinctive consequences of that writer's world view, of his artistic shadow.

Iskander links art with ethics. He returns to his discussion of Lev Tolstoj's views of literature in "Tret'ja kniga poéta" [3]. Iskander states that Tolstoj came to the conclusion that the strengthening of the ethical content in a work of art was achieved at the expense of the displacement of the aesthetic and vice versa. This severe paradox, according to Iskander, luckily is refuted by Tolstoj's own works, and that here one comes across beauty and truth in inseparable unity.

The other extreme, Iskander feels, is represented by the Symbolists, who attempted to create an art independent

of ethical content. As a general rule there is a movement in the development of the artist from the preponderance of beauty to a predominance of truth.

It is clear that Iskander is concerned with truth in art. In his review "Golos Abxazskix uščelij" of the poéma Pesn' skaly by Bagrat Šinkuba, Iskander makes an interesting comment concerning Šinkuba's portrayal of the hero. Iskander is very pleased to see that Šinkuba does not fall into the trap of false sociologism in which bearers of socialist democratic ideas are introduced into the work and heroes are also depicted as complete Marxists. In contrast, the main character of the poéma breathes of life and tragic truth. It is evident that Iskander believes in truth in art and opposes any attempts to rewrite history according to the principles of dialectical materialism.

Iskander considers writing to be creation, which is a spiritual act. In "O novatorstve, banal'nyx istinax i citatax" he states that every word is a representation of the whole. It is impossible to tear one word away from another "without bloodshed." For Iskander there is a feeling that certain words are correct and others are not and that each author has his own idea regarding the "plastičnost'" of a phrase.

When Iskander is writing, he does not try to please anyone else. He tries to express his own feelings and

beliefs in a convincing, clear-cut manner. His own experience has shown that when he himself is satisfied, the reader will be too.

It is Iskander's philosophy that serious matters can be portrayed with humor. In an interview with T. Mamladza "Ob očage i dome,"5 Iskander emphasized that it is important for people to retain their ability to laugh. To Iskander, humor includes in itself a multitude of the most diverse shades of human feeling. As he states in "Pružina jumora"6, humor blazes up with a living flame when different feelings exist together within one gesture, one phrase, one character.

In "Poézija dramy"7, Iskander discusses the sources of inspiration. Iskander divides authors into two groups. Some writers reflect many varied aspects of life in their works. Thus life itself in all its manifestations is the source. Another type of writer is inspired by dramatic situations. The spark only runs through their works when they feel the conflict between good and evil. When they attempt to write of something lacking this conflict, they are flat and tongue-tied.

In addition to being able to laugh at the problems of life, a person must also feel his roots. Iskander also makes the point in the interview with Mamaladza that by being in touch with his past, a person will be wiser and more correct in the way he directs his life. This comes

through in Iskander's review of Debora Vaarandi's poetry.[8] Her poems strike a responsive cord in Iskander, for he perceives that her works are enveloped in the atmosphere of her native region and are born of that which she loves.

Criticism of Iskander's Prose

Themes

Iskander's prose exhibits a thematic diversity, although criticism limits itself to the most prevelant themes, ignoring a number of equal importance. The two major categories Iskander's prose is divided into are: 1.) his cycle of childhood stories, and 2.) the cycle of works concerning Iskander's student and adult years.

The critics Smelkov, Lebedov, Čertkov, Švarc, Rassadin, Vinogradov, and Burlingame note that Iskander's works form one united whole, where characters reappear. Ju. Smelkov[9] identifies the cycle of childhood stories which are united by theme and the personality of the lyrical hero, the author as a child. This theme of childhood is the theme of growing up. He correctly points out that Iskander clearly and perceptively catches those moments in the life of a child when he becomes a litle bit more grown-up, more experienced in life. I agree with Smelkov's point that these works are structured around a particular psychological problem, which is illustrated by events from Iskander's own childhood.

Smelkov rightly contends that Iskander moves from this childhood cycle to his adult stories, an organic move since childhood is the theme of growing up. The tree of childhood, the symbolic name of one collection of short stories, reminds us that the fruits of childhood are not only memories, they also form a bridge between the world of the child and the world of the adult.

Helen Burlingame[10] wrote the most comprehensive critical essay concerning Iskander's prose. She divides Iskander's prose into four categories. The first and largest group is about Iskander's childhood. A second, smaller group deals with his student and adult life. These works are considered to be less successful, since they are more schematic and concern trite matters. L. Čertkov[11] agrees with this opinion, adding that although the works are more complicated and more serious, they do not always come up to the level of those among the childhood cycle. Dolženiki, Posramlenie fal'šivomonetčikov, and Put' iz varjag v greki are, in my opinion, indeed weaker than those stories about Iskander's childhood. However, I feel that other works such as Sozvezdie kozlotura, and later stories Utraty and Serdce are excellent works which could be compared favorably with the best from Iskander's childhood group.

Burlingame continues to divide Iskander's works into a third category--those about a particular character. These

people, whom Iskander knows well, are either from his childhood or young adult years. I have included them in my own analysis among either the childhood stories or the adult stories--not dividing them into a separate category.

The fourth category of works in Burlingame's analysis is an "other" category, for these works have no relationship to Iskander or his relatives and friends. These works tend to be experiments in various untried techniques. Neblagodarnyj prestupnik is a successful experiment in skaz, which follows the path of Zoščenko. Urok igry v šaxmaty is an experiment in narrative mode, for it is told completely in dialogue. The young man in the story is the same narrator/author of Iskander's young adult stories. Therefore, I have included it among that group.

The third story included in this group is Dom v pereulke, a work I have placed in the group concerning the theme of love. In Burlingame's opinion love is a relatively infrequent theme which is elsewhere treated in a semihumorous vein. She feels that this lyrical story is not characteristic of Iskander, yet it is one of his best works. I cannot agree that Iskander turns to the theme of love infrequently and then only in a humorous manner. In her analysis, Burlingame does not include Morskoj skorpion, which is a penetrating analysis of love from many sides. Iskander turns to the theme of love again in

Malen'kyj gigant bol'šogo seksa, although this works deals with the exotic aspect of love, plus pornography and homosexuality. Again Burlingame does not discuss this work.

That love is a significant theme in Iskander's works, particularly in Morskoj skorpion, is noted by Varlamova, Čudakova, and Vinogradov[12]. Varlamova and Cudakova state that this new theme did not interest Iskander previously. However, this is not entirely correct. Several short stories previous to this povest' deal with the topic, although Morskoj skorpion is the first extended treatment. Čudakova and Vinogradov emphasize the interconnection between love and happiness. Vinogradov stresses that the "bedroom scenes" are present not for the erotic value, but because they are a part of Sergej's problem--his almost fatal unhappiness. For Iskander the search for love is a spiritual search for happiness.

The theme of Abkhazia runs deep through Iskander's works, as many critics note. Vinogradov and Atarov[13] stress that Iskander needs his native Abkhazian roots; he needs to refresh himself in the cool waters of Abkhazia, his spiritiual homeland. It is not only the country of his childhood, but the living combination of the moral wisdom and spiritual culture of a small nation which uncovered the truths of the ability to live together in harmony, goodness, and dignity. I agree with Vinogradov

when he states that Iskander will leave the theme of Abkhazia to discover new ideas only to return to it and then leave again. Abkhazia is Iskander's deep well, which he can return to again and again.

Burlingame points out that Iskander undoubtedly has a deeply embedded reason behind his portrayal of Abkhazia with all its customs:

> It is some of these "more fragile values" that the author himself is seeking to record for posterity in his writing and particularly in such works as "Grandfather," "Old Crooked Arm," and "Sandro of Chegem," where through the life stories of certain individuals one gains a sense of the continuity as well as the many changes in Abkhazia over the past century.[14]

The theme of nature is closely interconnected with the theme of Abkhazia. Suprisingly few critics analyze this important element of Iskander's prose. Iskander himself remarks on the importance of a person's attitude toward nature. He says, "Show me how you describe nature and I will tell you what you think of people."

Vickie Babenko[15] is one of the few critics to note that Iskander gives nature a central place in his prose. She is correct when she states that in Iskander's works nature links the world of reality with the world of feeling. I. Linginov[16] also emphasizes this point, adding that it is the world of animals and children, praised by Iskander, which is in tune with nature. This world is superior to the adult world where man is at odds with nature and hides his true feelings.

Style

A number of points concerning Iskander's style are brought out by the critics highlighting important apsect of Iskander's writing. One component of his style is Iskander's ability to capture a given moment along with its hidden significance. To B. Sarnov[17] this is Iskander's most characteristic feature. He gives a good analysis of Iskander's method of description, calling it "artless" slow-motion, which shows that which under normal circumstances would be extraordinarily difficult or impossible to see. Iskander's hero simultaneously appears as he was a second ago and as he will become in one moment.

An important element of this slow-motion description is Iskander's acute attention to details. Sarnov points out that any significant detail may become the occasion for extensive discussion, for thought provoking, deep analysis. This is a step by step process at the end of which it no longer seems that the detail is insignificant. As importantly, the details also help to reveal a character's state of mind, as Burlingame notes.

Iskander focuses his works on complex human relationships. Vladimir Osinskij[18] stresses that Iskander portrays these complex relationships with simplicity of language combined with bright humor. Almost every story contains a maxim, which is born in the depths of the work

and is the logical, inescapable outcome of events. I agree with Osinskij that the precision of observation and sharpened feelings are such that the reader does not simply experience events along with the hero. The reader remembers events he himself experienced. Iskander's individuality lies in his ability to show the general human trait through his own personal examples.

Fazil' Iskander began his literary career as a poet. I. Grekova[19] and others point out that this is immediately apparent in his prose. His phrases are complete; like lines of poetry, it is impossible to remove even one word. Vladimir Solov'ev[20] also emphasizes Iskander's sensitivity to the word and the image--one of Iskander's consistent traits. To illustrate Solov'ev cites an excellent passage from Den' Čika, describing a butterfly which intrigues a puppy. This is a picture of a butterfly in motion, not a static butterfly. The stress is transferred from the epithet to the verb (zastruilas', otprjanula, struilas', sduvalas', mercala, zaletela), from the description to the action. Thus the butterfly comes alive for the reader.

Imagery

Iskander's imagery comes from a wide variety of sources, the extent of which the critics fail to realize. Burlingame is the lone critic to touch on the diversity of Iskander's imagery, noting that animals, plants, and Greek and Roman history and mythology are important sources for

Iskander. Burlingame also discusses Iskander's use of imagery, frequently for humorous effect in characterization. This is particularly true in the case of the portrayal of the English professor in Angličanin s ženoj i rebenkom. Here the humorous imagery, as Burlingame points out, produces "ostranenie" for the Englishman does not match up with the narrator's preconceived picture of what an English professor should look like.

Personification is a major device Iskander uses successfully in his prose. Plants, animals, and inanimate objects (such as a suitcase or a mouthful of tea) take on personalities and lives of their own. Burlingame remarks further that Iskander draws on the animal world extensively for his imagery, giving animals human characteristics. She cites a number of excellent examples, such as the rooster in Petux who becomes a maharaja with his harem of chickens. At the same time, Iskander lends animals (including the mule Arapka, his dog Belička, and a wolfhound puppy) human speech. Longinov emphasizes that Iskander's animals are extraordinarily expressive, so much so that they carry on conversations in their minds.

Digressions

Digressions are an integral part of many of Iskander's works. They fulfill a multitude of purposes. As Vladimir

Solov'ev observes, the narration is carefree, free-flowing, at times even arbitrary. Along the way Iskander notices many things, even though they have no relationship to the storyline. Leonid Lenč[21] elaborates on this further. By touching on the many side themes diverging from the main theme, Iskander adds a polyphonic breadth of sound to his works. In these digressions, as D. Brown[22] points out, the narrator talks to the reader, tells stories, or philosophizes. Through the digressions the author/narrator becomes an active participant in the story. In addition to these uses, Burlingame adds that these asides fill in background details and add authenticity, for the author/narrator seems to feel that he must tell the reader all that he knows about his characters. Taken together, for whatever purposes they are included, these digressions lend a rambling quality to his work.

Narrative Voice

The narrator is very important in setting the tone of the work. The majority of Iskander's works have the same lyrical narrator, although at times he is given different names. B. Sarnov brings this out clearly:

> Раскрывая очередной рассказ, очередную повесть, очередной сборник, Искандер, вы может быть заранее уверены, что опять встретитесь со своими старыми знакомыми. Одни и те же герои кочуют у него из рассказа в рассказ, из книги в книгу. И главный герой -- все время один и тот же, хотя зовется он всякий раз по-разному: иногда Сандрик, иногда

> Ремзик, иногда Чик, но чаще он совсем не имеет имени -- это в тех случаях, когда повествование откровенно ведется от первого лица.[23]

This narrator is a simple-hearted person who speaks directly to the reader. As Ju. Smelkov states, Iskander begins his stories without poses or literary ruses, as a person simply sharing various events of his life with the reader. Iskander admits that he likes to create the appearance of simple-heartedness, then the reversal of plot is unexpected. The combination of these qualities gives Iskander's prose sharpness and originality.

The narrator of these works is an active participant, who has a number of functions. Solov'ev delineates the various tasks the narrator performs:

> Однако все это следствия, а причина кроется в поведении самого рассказчика, который не скрывается за занавесом, а действует на сцене, вмешиваясь в диалог, расталкивая героев, посмеиваясь над ними. Рассказчик один, хотя ампула у него несколько -- от интервьюера и мемуариста до историографа и летописца. О дяде Сандро рассказано не только как о литературном герое, но еще и как о земляке, родственнике, друге.[24]

The narrator also probes his own psychological reactions, as well as those of relatives, friends and even animals as Burlingame states. Thus the narrator's presence is strongly felt in the majority of works. Sidorov[25] correctly points out that the stylistic unity of

Iskander's prose is directly conditioned by the personality of his narrator, who is not objective.

In many works the narrative voice shifts between adult and child. This provides a double perspective of events. The stopped moments of childhood in pre-war Abkhazia are described from two sides--today's (the author's) and yesterday's (the child's), enabling Iskander to create a three dimensional image. Lebedev[26] stresses that the device of looking at the world through a child's eyes is a valuable one which Iskander uses well. The child's soul is like a synonym of spiritual purity and unclouded moral purity. D. Brown brings out that this boy is not a passive listener; rather he is morally alert--his mind and psyche are constantly working, analyzing adult matters. In this repsect Iskander follows in the footsteps of many renowned literary predecessors--Dickens, L. Tolstoj, Čexov, Korolenko, Twain, and Dostoevskij. Gor'kij, Prišvin, and Paustovskij are added to the Lebedev's list by Vladimir Solov'ev.

Smelkov gives an extended explanation of the parallels between Iskander and Mark Twain. The young hero/narrator of Iskander's works is cunning and breaks every and all adult rules. In this respect Zapretnyj plod is very similar to Tom Sawyer, especially the episode of painting the fence. Both Iskander and Twain portray the same

child's psyche at the base of which is the "game" in which the child establishes his own rules.

All Iskander's works are not first person narrations. Čik, as Solov'ev notes, is a pseudonym for the autobiographical hero. He is described in the third person so Iskander can look at Čik from the side. Burlingame indicates that there is an increased trend to use third person narration in Iskander's prose after 1966. After this date, even for the stories in the first person, the emphasis is on a character other than the narrator (e.g. Kolčerukij, Deduška, Bogatyj portnoj i drugie). The narrator primarily functions as an observer or storyteller (e.g. Letnim dnem). Echoing Burlingame's sentiments, Sidorov predicts that Iskander will develop in the direction of writing more frequently without a lyrical hero. This is a very possible development, for Iskander seems to be interested in experimenting with new techniques, although I feel that he will never entirely abandon his lyrical narrator.

Characters and Characterization

There is a very strong autobiographical strain in Iskander's prose. Iskander discusses this aspect of his writing in his interview "Ob očage i dome." Certain characters, he indicates, are really based on his relatives. For instance, Sandro is based on Iskander's uncle Siko. In addition, there is an Uncle Kjazym (his

mother's brother) who is multilingual speaking Greek, Georgian, Armenian, Mingrelian, and Svan. Other relatives and friends include his father, grandfather, a teacher (Aleksandra Ivanovna), and a friend/poet (Jura Servasidze). The setting for his works is not an imaginary place either, but in reality is the new settlement Axusa.

Due to this strong autobiographical nature of his writing, Sarnov argues that Iskander's characters do not have complete freedom of choice. Each must act exactly as he acted in real life. Thus Iskander does not create, he remembers without changing anything visibly. However, Iskander, through his spokesman Zenon in Utraty, states that he draws his characters from real-life models. He highlights the relationship between the model and the portrait:

> Зенон временами поглядывал на свою родственницу, о которой он когда-то писал, и как ему казалось, это были хорошие страницы. Поглядывая на модель своего образа и сравнивая их, он чувствовал странное удовлетворение сходством модели с образом, а не наоборот.
>
> В его сознании давно уже оригиналом стал написанный им портрет, но сейчас, глядя на модель, он испытывал поощрительное удовлетворение моделью за то, что она похожа на свой образ, словно она, родственница, кстати, абсолютно не подозревавшая о существовании своего словесного портрета, тем не менее старается быть на него похожим и, несмотря не время, все еще преуспевает в этом.[27]

While it is drawn from real life, the portrait is distinct

from the model and has an independent life of its own. Thus Iskander thinks that they are related but not identical. Sarnov's observation that Iskander's characters are remembered and do not have complete freedom is correct yet he overstates the case.

Iskander prefers to select his characters from the native Abkhazians he knows best of all. As Švarc[28] indicates, Iskander describes ordinary, every-day life among ordinary people close to the hero. Although he has lived most of his adult life in Moscow, city dwellers do not figure prominently in his writing. Rassadin[29] points out that the Abkhazian peasant is Iskander's favorite hero. He dwells in a world which is more harmonious and spiritually balanced than the city dweller. He is a country satirist, who maintains his value system in tact. This is true in Deduška, Kolčerukij, Sozvezdie Kozlotura, and Sandro iz Čegema. Clearly other works should be added to this list, most notable Brigadir Kjazym.

One of Iskander's strengths as a writer is his ability to make his characters come to life. They are not static, but rather dynamic, three-dimensional portraits. Kirill Koval'dži[30] sums this up when he states that the characters Iskander draws are complete. They show how each person takes shape and his attitude toward the world.

Burlingame analyzes a number of the devices Iskander employs to develop his characters. She points out that

imagery is important in rendering each person more colorful as well as more humorous. An excellent example is chosen to illustrate this--the sleepy agronomist of Sozvezdie Kozlotura is compared to General Kutuzov sleeping in his chair at an army staff meeting. She also notices how Iskander uses physical details to offer insight into someone's character or state of mind. When Iskander describes his grandfather, he emphasizes his feet--the same feet seen in religious paintings of the apostles and prophets. The use of comparison is another device that Burlingame calls to our attention. This is particularly evident in Англичанин с женой и ребенком. The narrative seesaws back and forth between the description of the English professor and his wife and that of the typical Soviet professor and his wife. Burlingame goes on to add that Iskander also uses ostranenie, the most striking example is again drawn from the portrayal of the Englishman. In this case it stems from his broken Russian and the humorous imagery which emphasizes the disparity between expectation and reality of the professor's physical appearance. Burlingame stresses that Iskander's portraits are rich in psychological details.

Burlingame rightfully singles out one portrayal that does not match the boldness and vivacity of the character. The Rich Tailor is less successful, due to the uninspiring, petty personality of Suren. The anecdotes

from the tailor's life are less colorful and exciting than the events surrounding Kolcerukij or Iskander's grandfather.

Humor and Satire

Iskander emphasizes the value of humor in life as well as in literature. It is essential to retain the ability to laugh. Critics underscore what Iskander himself says. L. Čertkov points to the story Trinadcatyj podvig Gerakla for a statement of Iskander's credo for writing. Iskander says that it is not necessary to speak in a serious manner about serious subjects. Humor will make the serious even more serious. I. Pitljar[31] comments that Sozvezdie kozlotura follows this method used by Xarlamyj Digenovič in Trinadcatyj podvig Gerakla. Here the teacher ridiculed his students and tempered their souls with laughter. In this manner he taught them to hate lies and all that is false.

It is stressed by Osinskij that Iskander's artistic creed states that humor is always truthful. Humor is found after one has peered into the abyss of pessimism. He continues that Iskander's laughter is spontaneous and, at the same time, it is full of deep, serious thought concerning the people and life around him. Iskander has, writes Osinskij, the capacity for rare art which speaks with a smile about the serious and seriously about the humorous, which exposes evil with pathos, which upholds

good without tearfully tender emotion, and, finally, which avoids being boring while staying on the path of the moralist.

Another critic stresses the importance of this statement in Načalo that humor is always truthful and that this is exactly why it is funny. In Eventov's[32] judgment, this could become the acknowledged formula for realistic humor and satire.

Sivokon'[33] quotes Dostoevskij's view that real humor is always based on a real, deep emotion and has a completely serious moral base. In Sivokon's judgement almost all Iskander's stories prove this true. Slovo is a very distinct example of this. Here the author starts out joking manner, then he becomes serious and emotional, changing his entire style.

Edward J. Brown[34] points out that Iskander excels in humorous, innocent-seeming satire. To accomplish this he uses a simple-minded, faintly ridiculous character" or a child as the narrator. In this manner, Iskander is able to avoid official anger. The story Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil is an excellent example of Iskander humor, for here Iskander, using a child narrator, treats the purges and terror in a light manner. Burlingame confirms Brown's opinion, furthering this analysis. She points out that the comic effect in the story is attained through the use of repetition, transposition of key, word play, and

humorous imagery. Vickie Babenko emphasizes that Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil, Iskander's funniest story, also contains his most pointed satire, directed against the use of communist propaganda to indoctrinate young minds. The denunciation scene is a study in the grotesque. Babenko points out that the title of this story is a play on words referring to the opening lines of Evgenij Onegin by Puškin. Pitljar expands this point further, stating that at first glance Iskander's humor appears a litte naive and simplistic in keeping with the character of the hero. On closer analysis, it becomes apparent that this is not true.

Iskander finds humor in the everyday matters of life. One unchanging characteristic of Iskander's style noted by Atarov[35] is that the idea of the story seems to idle about while the narrator delights in choosing the most insignificant and humdrum situation and in portraying its humor to the last drop. In all Iskander's works, behind the humor of the insignificant, a significant meaning is perceptible. The final strokes of the portrait are no longer humorous or frivilous.

In Lebedev's view the stories in the cycle of Iskander's childhood evoke a smile that is almost ironic, a little kind-hearted, and very warm. Yet behind this smile, anger begins to show through. Lebedev too singles out Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil as the best example of

Iskander's humor. The scene of the boy's attempt to unmask his uncle as a spy is extremely funny, yet the internal conflict does not contain anything comic. On the contrary it is very dramatic. Again we see Iskander's anger through a smile. This anger almost always remains behind the camera, while the figure of a mischievous, smiling boy stands in front. Lebedev maintains that this harmony of anger and a smile is not always achieved in the adult stories. The smile looks somewhat crooked and affected on an adult.

Another story singled out as an excellent example of Iskander's satire is Letnim dnem. Deming Brown stresses that the style of this story, as are many others, is informal, warm and ingratiating, yet at the same time it contains a serious satirical component. The light tone disarms the reader, leaving him unprepared for the satire. While enjoying themselves in one of Suxumi's cafes, the narrator and a German tourist discuss an individual's moral duty when faced with the demands of the Gestapo. Burlingame brings out the same point, adding to this analysis the fact that the story includes the element of suspense, an element not generally found in Iskander's works. I cannot totally agree with this statement. Iskander uses suspense quite successfully in a number of works--Zapretnyj plod, Remzik, Vozmezdie, and Brigadir Kjazym in addition to Letnim dnem.

For the most part, Iskander's humor is light-hearted. He banters about human errors. However, Sidorov underscores the fact that Iskander becomes satiric when people inflict harm on others. Sidorov concludes that Iskander's laughter in ethics is a synonym for truth.

There are many parallels to be found linking Iskander with Nikolaj Gogol. Iskander's "Southern color" and humor remind Rassadin of Gogol's writing of Little Russia. Burlingame enumerates the similarities found in the satire of these two writers. They both satirize the bureaucratic mentality; use phrases containing self-cancelling qualifications; string together long, involved sentences; have a rambling, anecdotal style; and use lengthy, often lyrical, digressions. The parallels are quite striking particularly in Sozvezdie Kozlotura.

Bonnie Carey[36] discusses Kroliki i udavy, an animal fable exposing the evils of the political systems governing the rabbits and the boa constrictors. Since repression is restored, Iskander presents the reader with a message of gloom. The povest' contains frequent humorous episodes resulting, here too, in a "Gogolian laughter through tears."

Vickie Babenko provides a detailed analysis of Iskander's satire, including an examination of his similarities with literary predecessors. Babenko feels that neither Il'f-Petrov nor Zoščenko is Iskander's model.

Similarities are to be found with the satirists Gogol' and Zamjatin. She stresses the parallels with Zamjatin in regards to his optimism as well as his musical, rhythmic prose. Bulgakov, Zamjatin, and Kataev use stereotypes, whereas Iskander's characters are individuals. Neither does Iskander demean his characters as Gogol' does. Iskander does not imbue his characters with particular class weaknesses following the style of Bulgakov and Zoščenko. Iskander has his own unique style which merges lyricism, nature, and a metaphoric style together with the child's perspective. This blend is the key to Iskander's gentle satire.

A Soviet interpretation of Iskander's stories is found in an article by Z. Koroza[37], who critiques children's books based on how well they fullfil the premise that Soviet literature must create an image of the Soviet worker and show a wide panorama of possible jobs in Soviet society. Koroza feels that the hero of the short story Pervoe delo is a child of socialist society from his first steps, breathing in the worker's atmosphere. Iskander can not remain aloof from this. She feels that Iskander presents labor as the essence and idea of existence. It is the main moral force of life. Koroza argues that Iskander's poetry, color, clear view of the world, and uncompromising morals place these stories in the ranks of the best works for children and youth. This article is of

little use due to its severly limited view of the purpose of children's literature.

A number of individual works have been singled out by the critics for detailed analysis. This list includes Den' i noč' Čika, Remzik, Sozvezdie kozlotura, Morskoj skorpion, and Sandro iz Čegema. These articles provide insight into the poetics of these particular works.

Den' i noč' Čika

Regarding Den' Čika and Nočnye tajny, Solov'ev mentions that Iskander diverges from his previous direct autobiographical approach. Instead Čik appears--a "dummy person", a pseudonym for the author. Čik is a familiar, unknown person. Solov'ev contends that these two works are more complex and more subtle than previous works. In place of Iskander's sparkling and ceaseless humor, we find thoughtfulness and an inclination for philosophizing. Čik attentively looks at the surrounding world, and Iskander, in turn, lovingly and slightly ironically watches this observant hero. Thus the works have two philosophers. The narration includes many digressions on things unrelated to the plot. For this reason these two works are not that logically structured. Despite this Solov'ev feels that they are excellent works. Their most important aspect is the feeling of a sunny, endless day of life and the great happiness of childhood.

Šitova[38] draws an analogy about the simple story of Den' Čika. She compares it to an acorn, for hidden within the novella one finds an entire small novel about the five children of Čik's courtyard. This is a description of one day in one childhood, which is simple and normal. Yet behind each of the five children, one can see an individual with his own character and fate, each with the right to his own life. Iskander explores the very structure of the group with its hierarchy of strong and weak, with its complexity of mutual attraction and antagonism. Šitova stresses that it is important that this small group is a collection of diverse characters, having a spectrum of relations to each other, to life.

Longinov analyzes Den' Čika from a different aspect. He indicates that Iskander motivation for the povest' is Čik's preadolsecent state. Iskander has caught pieces of childhood life with its rituals and codes of honor, with traces of the past and hints of the future. Čik contemplates many puzzling things that confront him in life. Just as the animals are personified in this novella and frequently carry on imaginary conversations in their minds, Čik too frequently goes without words. He uses grimaces, fierce eyes, expressive looks--trying to convey with a glance his anger, threat, or indignation.

S. Georgievskaja[39] considers Den' Čika to be a lyrical work above all. One hears the musical sounds not the

words. She indicates that the reader sees the world only through Čik's eyes. He is full of the strength of boyish health and amusing openness. His concerns are those of a twelve year old boy: love for his dog, unrecognized love of a girl, compassion for a friend, ambition, and the desire to be top man. Each child in the book has his own melody of the soul. Conversely Nočnye tajny, she states, is a story about night fears and about honor. Georgievskaja feels that the reader feels the fullness of life mixed together with its harsh taste.

Remzik

Remzik is different from Iskander's previous works in a number of ways. N. Krymova[40] considers it a tragic, totally unexpected work. At first Remzik seems to be the same young hero as Čik--for they are from the same courtyard. But there is a sharp change in the central situation when the wife of Remzik's idol (Uncle Bagrat) starts to see another man. At this point Iskander steps aside from Remzik and discusses matters from an adult perspective in a calm, analytical manner. Krymova points out that Iskander pays great attention to the little things, not forgetting that a twelve-year-old has difficulty distinguishing the small and the big. When the order of Remzik's world is destroyed, the mood of the povest' changes. Up to this point, Krymova notes, Iskander used humor. Now usual, everyday phrases are

filled with a second, uneasy meaning. In her opinion, the boy is running away from what is "dead" towards the living, but he is also running towards danger. Although Remzik does not consciously think about his problem on the way home, Iskander superimposes the most melancholy associations about his father and Bagrat onto events. Death has been walking with Remzik all the way home. Yet he could not die, Krymova argues, until Remzik was free of his guilt. Thus he does not die in a car crash but only after he found a way to free himself of his guilt and achieved harmony. Krymova correctly points out that his death will be interpreted as accidental, for what he does has no relationship to what is troubling him. However, it is deeply in keeping with his fate.

Further insight into Remzik is provided by M. Éjdel'man[41]. He indicates that the external world is very different from the internal world. The tone of the story at the time of WW II is cheerful. Iskander does not concentrate on the world but rather on the fate of one boy caught in a battle with evil. Éjdel'man suggests that the imagery of the work is based on colors. The entire fabric of the povest' is bright, except for the dark spot of the "black man" in the shadows. The colors expose the attitudes of the boy. It becomes light against darkness. All the colors and details take on a second meaning, leading towards a single goal.

Iskander shows another side of his talent in Remzik in Él'sberg's[42] opinion. Here the tragic side of life comes to the forefront. Remzik is similar to Ščedrin's Rožděstvenskaja skazka. The boy fights with forces he does not have the strength to defeat. Remzik does not only have classical, "eternal" traits of childhood. The dramatic tension saves him from becoming faceless. In Remzik in contrast to Iskander's other prose, the narrator plays an entirely insignificant role. Él'sberg feels that it is unfortunate that the author's voice is only heard once in the manner of L. Tolstoj. It is Él'sberg's opinion that Remzik is a witness to the growing range of artistic searching by Iskander.

Morskoj skropion

Morskoj skorpion has received divided reviews by the Soviet press, while Western critics make no mention of this povest'. There is much that is different in this work to attract the attention of the critics. Those elements new to Iskander's prose are also the sources of debate.

Varlamova states that Morskoj skorpion presents a new style. Previously Iskander played the role of God with three faces. He was capable of appearing everywhere at once--in the skin of the main character; inside that with which the hero conflicted; then back to the stratosphere to propose all the variation, one after the other. Thus

there is almost nothing left of the former Iskander. Morskoj skorpion is a sad, penitent work about the narrator's conscience, which bites just like a "sea scorpion." Iskander's laughter has sufficient strength only to break through the bitter compostion in snatches.

Digressions, reminiscences of Sergej Baskapsarov, comprise two thirds of the work; the majority of the digressions have a love character at first glance. Previously Iskander was never interested in this side of human life. (As I pointed out previously in the chapter, this view is not totally correct.) The agony of the flesh and spirit of Sergej are lavishly described--almost to the point of "pošlost." However, Varlamova argues that this theme is mixed with repentence. In reviewing his entire life, Sergej reproaches himself and passionately searches for a spiritual way of life. The capacity to suffer for truth is the fullest proof of a moral attitude toward truth; without this capacity to suffer no truth can exist. Varlamova continues, stating that salvation is found only in complete and total repentance. Iskander speaks about this in passing when he talks of Rembrandt's picture of the prodigal son. There must be no trickery in the repentance however. Iskander also feels that there is another tragedy in not understanding Rembrandt. The strong always want an artist to be a hybrid--to be as

great as Rembrandt and at the same time to be subject to the rules of self-protection and not to the rules of art.

In Varlamova's opinion the philosophizing at times spoils the povest', especially at the end when Iskander discusses how one should not choose a wife by her outer appearance. Iskander's open didacticism conflicts with the high level of psychology of the story. It is Varlamova's conclusion, and one that I agree with, that Iskander needs to avoid this pedagogic tone. All this moral preaching should be put into the undercurrent in order to perfect this interesting and unusual povest'.

M. Get'man[43] is highly critical of Morskoj skorpion. Get'man expresses his doubts as to whether there really is a plot to the story. If there is one it is extremely simple--after being stung by a poisonous sea scorpion, all of the author's short life passes before his eyes. The poisonous sea scorpion symbolizes the contemporary, militant philistine of the era of scientific-technical progress. Get'man regards the hero to be more of an anti-hero. He feels that the author's attitude to Sergej is complicated and contradictory. Iskander allows Sergej to whip himself, and then Iskander openly delights in him. It seems to Get'man that those surrounding Sergej are not living people, but a faceless crowd. Volodja Palba is the one deeply upright man in the povest'. But even here his figure is bent, for he was unjustly sentenced for

self-defense. Get'man doubts that Iskander lives in the real world. Such narrow-mindedness no longer exists.

Get'man does not have a high opinion of Iskander's style either. In his opinion the paragraphs are clumsy, each containing three to four "Čto's". There are also four or five pronouns in one sentence, making the syntax unclear.

Marietta Čudakova takes issue with Get'man's criticism of Morskoj skorpion. She argues that Get'man only wants to see what he is accustomed to seeing, not anything new. She feels it is dangerous when an individual reader asserts his personal taste as the "rule." Iskander minimizes the external events around which he focuses a nucleus of memories. Sergej constantly returns to the idea of love and its interrelationship with happiness. To Čudakova Iskander's humor and self-irony are his most attractive traits.

I. Vinogradov[44] replies to both Čudakova and Get'man. This povest', in Vinogradov's opinion, does not completely abandon Iskdander's beloved Abkhazia. However, it is not the same Abkhazia we have seen earlier. This is the contemporary, civilized, holiday shore. His native Abkhazia is now a vacation spot, almost an extension of the Moscow shores of the present. Vinogradov feels that Sergej sets out from the shore, real and symbolic, to fish. The beach is only a frame for Sergej's

reminiscences which follow one after the other, like a nonstop tape. Vinogradov equates the povest' with a chronicle of Sergej's unceasing, exhausting search for happiness.

Vinogradov argues with those who say this povest' contains too many bedroom scenes, for each person must deal with such problems and passions. Without this theme, Vinogradov contends, a large part of world literature would not exist. Continuing his argument, Vinogradov points out that Sergej does not recollect his love stories to savor them for their erotic value. Instead they bring sadness and anxiety. Sergej is trying to understand the nature of his almost fatal unhappiness.

Sozvezdie Kozlotura

Sozvezdie Kozlotura has had an excellent critical reception both inside and outside the Soviet Union. Critics consider this to be one of his best works, indeed his best longer work. In 1966 it was nominated by Novyj mir for the State Prize of the USSR in Literature.[45] The editor praises the povest' as Iskander's most important work, a witness to Iskander's talent. It is full of love of life and of the people and nature of Abkhazia. The satire, which is directed against "prožekturstvo," superficiality, and irresponsibility in work and life, is masterfully blended together with lyricism. Despite the glowing recommendation Sozvezdie Kozlotura did not win.

Iskander provides some insight into the impetus for the story.[46] Iskander read an anecdote in an Abkhazian newspaper about a man who raised a goatibex which was shown in a photograph. Several details struck Iskander, such as the fact that the goatibex retained its jumping ability. Iskander did not know why anyone would need this. He suddenly felt that the anecdote embodied what had been irritating him--campaigns accompanied by unanswered noise. All of this about campaigns surfaced in the word "Goatibex." The numerous lyrical digressions were added specifically to expose the inner life of the heroes, to shake the self-confidence of the plot, plus from time to time abandoning the plot. Iskander added the reminiscences of his grandfather's house and of one childhood adventure to provide a breath of fresh air following the scenes about the mannequins of kozloturism. They are to surpass the plot with their epic independence and lyrical melodiousness.

Craig Packard[47] makes a valid point when he states that Sozvezdie kozlotura cannot be studied as a work of Socialist Realism. It exhibits neither partijnost' nor idejnost' and it lacks a positive hero. The only element in agreement with the Socialist Realist tradition is the fact the Iskander attacks negative aspects of Soviet life.

Azanov[48] brings out that the subject of the arrival of a young specialist at work and of his confrontation with

bureaucrats is frequently found in Soviet literature. But Iskander takes a new path. His young specialist does not turn into some kind of fighting titan who overthrows the bureaucrats. Leonid Lenč[49] also states that this satiric story, a Punch and Judy show, differs from others of the same time period. He stresses the differences lie in Iskander's originality, national color, and musicality. It is obvious that the lyrical digressions are written by a poet.

Several critics emphasize that Sozvezdie Kozlotura does not fit into an exact genre description. I. Pitljar observes that this work is a complex fusion of satire and lyricism, nonmalicious humor and ruthless satire, anger and joy, philosophical tension and emotional freedom. I. Grekova agrees that there are too many other elements in the work to label it strictly humorous or satiric. Humor is not a genre in this case, but an attitude.

Packard states that Iskander is a master of many aspects of language including dialogue, slang, casual speech, and journalistic and bureaucratic language. His language is used to good effect for it aids the development of the antithetical structure of the novella. One focus of Iskander's attack is the abuse or misuse of language. Another satiric device pointed out is the use of a highly serious tone to present the debate of a trivial subject matter. Parody of journalistic language,

well-timed empty clichés, and colorful idioms are other linguistic devices present in the work. Packard adds that the dialogue between the two old pensioners is a free motif for humorous and satiric effect, much in the manner of Shakespeare's clown-like figures.

Sozvezdie kozlotura, Packard continues, has an antithetical structure. The hypocrisy of the kozlotur campaign is juxtaposed to the sincerity and truth of the childhood reminiscences of the narrator. The reminiscence retards the plot, generates moderate suspense, and acts as a break, enabling the reader to prepare for a new opinion of the Kozlotur. Solov'ev also stresses the importance of the seemingly unnecessary childhood digression. It serves as a counterweight to the plotline. The story is constructed so that the outer sham surrounding the kozlotur opposes the inner real world expressed through the life of the narrator.

Packard asserts that the majority of the intrigue centers around the figure of Avtandil Avtandilovič. The tension increases when the narrator begins to express his doubts about the campaign. A critical point is reached when the narrator is berated by Avtandil Avtandilovič for the article on the kozlotur. The turning point comes when the article criticizing the kozlotur appears in a central newspaper. This, according to Packard, again brings Lysenko and Moscow into the picture, as was done at the

beginning of the novella. There is a swift descent, in contrast to the slow build up (8 1/2 versus 66 pages). Packard feels that the conclusion contains a brilliant image summing up the irony of the campaign. Following the demise of the campaign, the sign over the soft drink pavillion was changed from "Vodopoj kozlotura" to "Vodopoj tura." He asserts that this signifies that campaigns can be switched on and off like lights. A further extrapolation implies that people's emotions can similarly be turned on and off. The final image of the narrator peacefully drinking coffee and gazing at the night sky ends the novella on an emotionally calm, positive note. According to Packard, this reaffirms the source of emotional honesty found in the work.

The digressions concern Iskander's childhood and add a lyrical and philosophical dimension to the story. Sidorov underscores that they are totally separate stories incorporated into the text linked only by phrases such as, "Suddenly I remembered...." Sidorov feels that when Iskander turns to the larger prose form he does not worry about composition, resulting in a more fragmented work.

Burlingame also notes that totally separate stories are included in the novella. The entire story Večernjaja doroga is inserted as a reminiscence in chapter three. This establishes a common link with Iskander's other

prose--attesting to the overlapping tendency of his prose. Each work is but a part of one organic whole.

The narrator, a young journalist, is an active participant in the story. As D.Brown points out he tells the story in the first prson with amused detachment, holding a mildly ironic view of himself. Burlingame continues this discussion, stating that the narrator is the central figure of the story. He is a more complex character than all others in the novel. This young journalist is extremely appealing for he is honest, sensitive, curious, and thoroughly human.

Sidorov stresses the important role the narrator plays in the story, for everything is colored by his gentle, ironic intonation, sometimes achieving lyrical digressions of restrained pathos. This hero comes from an Abkhazian peasant family, thus he carries with him the cunningly naive wisdom of a people linked for ages with nature.

Regarding characterization, Packard points out that the narrator is presented as an ordinary man one can trust. He is a dynamic, three-dimensional person, who is trying to maintain an objective point of view about the campaign and himself. His personality comes to the forefront when confronted by something for which he cares. The narrator is the main source of unity, for much of the action revolves around him.

Mintin[50] follows up Packard's point. He notes that it is important that the hero knows everyone, for it sharpens his feelings about everything that interfers with his fellow countrymen, the Abkhazian peasants.

The other characters, in Burlingame's opinion are vividly rendered, although some are reduced to a single distinctive trait or gesture, such as the two old men under the walnut tree and the sleepy agronomist. Others--including Vaxtang, Avtandil Avtandilovič, and Platon Samsonovič--are depicted in more detail. Still they remain character types rather than being fully delineated. Iskander, Burlingame stresses, uses humorous imagery to achieve vivid, colorful portraits.

As Solov'ev states the kozlotur is a character as well. At the same time he is a hyperbole for the sham. Packard reinforces this opinion, stating that the kozlotur is a somewhat sympathetic character at that, for Iskander anthropomorphizes the animal. It is proposed that the kozlotur is a device for confrontation to provoke and promote the reactions of the characters who come in contact with it. It can also be considered a metaphor of the new Soviet man--since both are promised as solutions to the problems of the world.

Packard continues that the figure of Platon Samsonovič is central to the plot for he supplies the incentive for the campaign. Packard correctly brings out the fact that

an ironic undercurrent is evident in his name--Platon. Platon, who is associated with the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, is not capable of independant thought. There is a sense of pathos connected with his figure for he becomes the victim, or rather scapegoat, in the end.

Pitljar also discusses characterization in the povest'. He notes that characters are divided into two groups. One group, including Avtandil Avtavdilovič, Platon Samsonovič, and Vaxtang Bočua, seems to have been born to produce and fan various campaigns. The other group opposite them includes the president of the kolkhoz "Orexovyj ključ", the tea gatherer Gogola, the chauffeur Valiko, and the narrator.

Krojčik[51] adds an interesting dimension to this discussion concerning the characters of Sozvezdie Kozlotura. He feels that Iskander is psychologically exact, as well as socially ruthless in drawing his characters. Platon Samsonovič, Avtandil Avtandilovič, and Vaxtang Bočua are only mimicing the activity of the times. They could live honestly, but it is more convenient for them to adjust constantly. Krojčik argues that the paragraph--stating that a new strange type of inventor has been created who is capable of flaring up many times but of never completely going out for he is funded by the state--contains the key to understanding the satirical idea behind the story.

Both Babenko and Burlingame note that Sozvezdie Kozlotura is a highly topical satire, focusing as it does on a particular phenomenon of recent Soviet history. There are many parallels with actual people and events--Khrushchev's agricultural policies, his suggested corn growing competition with Iowa, the experiments of Trofim Lysenko, and campaigns in the press.

Another important satiric device pointed out by Babenko is parody, particularly of Soviet journalism. Iskander's "Ballada o rybnom promysle" lampoons the genre of the ballad, a genre which is still popular in Soviet literature. It is extensively used to portray the Great Patriotic War.

Rassadin makes another important observation concerning this novella. He stresses that Iskander's grotesque is born in reality. While trying to achieve the grotesque in Sozvezdie Kozlotura, Iskander produces excellent genre pictures. The childhood digression contains a detailed description of goat tending and the habits of goats themselves.

The two negative reviews of Sozvezdie Kozlotura are not convincing criticisms. Byron Lindsey contends that Iskander is not a very good writer. He considers the main part of the story dealing with the goatibex campaign to be a trivial socialist satire. It is the fond memories of childhood that breathe life into this banal work. The

focus should have been more on this part. Iskander is not able to maintain the humorous tone, which is often crude according to Lindsey. Lindsey feels Iskander should have reduced the satire to a short story or left it to sharper wits. The plays on words and situations are too incomprehensible for the American public. Lindsey views this work in a very limited manner, only discussing how an American ignorant of life in the Soviet Union would see this book in translation. I do not feel that this review is worthy of serious consideration.

Another attack, this time in the Soviet press, is made by Lev Goldinov.[52] He states that Iskander lacks a sense of measure, that his memories feed on one-sided, distorted representations of reality, insulting to the Abkhazian people. He even maintains that kozloturs were not fictional animals, but boldly grazed in kolkhoz flocks. The arguments in the article are unconvincing and unsupported. They offer nothing of value to a literary analysis of Sozvezdie kozlotura.

Sandro iz Čegema

Only about one third of Sandro iz Cegema has been published in the Soviet Union. The remainder did not pass censorship and has only been published in the West. Thus Soviet critical reviews deal with a much smaller version of the novel.

Many parallels can be drawn to delineate Iskander's place in literature. In their analysis of Sandro iz Čegema, critics rightly consider Iskander a satirist, placing him among satirists of world renown, including Gogol', Sherwood Anderson, Swift, Mark Twain, Chaucer, Milan Kundera, and Gabriel García Márquez. The similarities with Gogol' and other prominent Russian satirist have been examined previously.

Susan Jacoby[53] finds the link with Mark Twain to be particularly acute. Both authors exhibit an irreverent humor, which has a tendency to sneak up on you rather than hitting you over the head. In addition they both display a strong regional flavor in their writing, which is understandable to all from other cultures as well. The Mississippi River and Čegem are vividly described so that they are permanently etched in the reader's mind. She points out that Chaucer's Canterbury is another real place which is granted the same mythic independant life as Čegem.

Iskander is critical of the Soviet Union, particularly the government. However, Jacoby points out that he is not openly poltical as Aleksandr Solženicyn is. Iskander is not a dissident figure in Soviet literature.

Similarities with two works of Milan Kundera are also stressed by critics. Susan Jacoby observes that both Iskander's Sandro iz Čegema and Kundera's The Joke are

comic epics which depend on and yet transcend the political situation out of which they arise. In Timothy Segay's view, a comparison exists with Milan Kundera's novel The Unbearable Lightness of Being. Both authors maintain similar views of time. They protest "the irreversibility of linear time and the disappearance of the cyclical time that the anthropologist Mircea Eleade has identified with archaic cultures."[54] The customs of a nation strengthen it and reemphasize that the nation did not begin yesterday and will not end tomorrow. The eternal, cyclical nature of life lends life a moral solidity which is essential.

Carl Senna[55], Jeri Laber[56], and a review in Publishers Weekly[57] also underscore a strong resemblence with the works of Gabriel García Márquez. Laber emphasizes that Iskander's flights of fantasy and fantastic tales lead to comparisons with García Márquez. A distinction must be made here though. Iskander touches more lightly than García Márquez, while his writing is grounded more deeply in reality.

The Publisher's Weekly review traces the parallels with García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude and the wry political satire of Sandro iz Čegema, which combines folklore together with a description rich in native customs in the manner found in García Márquez's work.

In addition to the likeness to García Márquez, Carl Senna finds Iskander's novel to bear an important resemblance to Turgenev's A Sprotsman's Sketches. In both works the Russian character is presented with humor and beauty. He fails to point out another important parallel here--the author's attitude to nature.

The influence of the Bible and folklore is felt as well in Sandro iz Čegema. Susan Jacoby aptly points out the subtlety in Iskander's use of the title "Belshazzar's Feast" for one of the chapters of Sandro iz Čegema, explaining that Belshazzar was the Babylonian king who gave the feast where the supernatural hand wrote on the wall predictiong the end of Belshazzar's kingdom. The comparison with Stalin's banquet is thus artfully drawn.

The folklore element is predominent in the novel, a fact that Solov'ev brings out. Sandro has his roots in Russian folk-lore, including the bogatyrs Il'ja Muromec, Dobrynja Nikitič, and Aleša Popovič, and Ivanuška-duračok. Similarities with Xodža Nasreddin of Moslem folk-lore are also noted, a point also made by Varlamova. During the course of the novel, Solov'ev feels that Sandro's image is eroded, although not entirely. Sandro becomes a jester instead of a bogatyr, even though there is still a bit of a bogatyr left in him. Sandro's image is formed by association, a cohesion of different traits and events which have multiple meanings. Sandro is a folk-hero, not

a contemporary man. Through Sandro, Iskander presents the unerring reaction of the people to history. He does not think within the narrow biological boundaries of one individual life, but within the spaciousness of the unlimited life of a nation. Thus Solov'ev states, Iskander joins twentieth century literature and folk-lore concepts of life, time, and history. However, the folk-hero is indifferent to external events, and this, in Solov'ev's opinion, is impossible in the real world.

The discussion of Sandro iz Čegema also revolves around an analysis of the structure of the novel. Some critics feel that the "novel" is a loosely structured collection of tales with no apparent order. A few others, conversely, feel that the chapters forms an integrated whole.

Joyce Toomre[58] feels that the novel is really a collection of semi-autonomous tales unified by the central character of Sandro. The Kirkus Review[59] echoes this opinion, calling Sandro iz Čegema a not-quite-a-novel consisting more of episodes than of accumulating chapters. Burlingame is more explicit in her analysis of this matter. She stresses that this is more a series of anecdotes and less a novel for it is loosely organized around the central figure of Sandro and lacks real unity. The eight chapters of the Soviet version could easily be separate stories. In part she contends that this is due

to Soviet censorship, which kept as much as two thirds of the novel from being published. Secondly, it is due to Iskander's anecdotal style. This work lacks a tightly integrated plot. Further, I agree with her when she asserts that the chronology is jumbled for no aesthetic reason. What little unity exists by focusing on Sandro is destroyed in the conclusion, which deals solely with Sandro's daughter Tali. Despite these drawbacks, Burlingame still considers it an interesting work because of its vivid details, colorful characters, and humor.

Varlamova continues Burlingame's argument. The eight tales do not take shape as a novel. This, in Varlamova's opinion, is especially true if you consider that in two chapters the main hero, Sandro, is totally absent or plays a third-place role. The problem is not that Sandro iz Čegema consists of tales, for Lermontov's Geroj našego vremeni is also such a collection, yet it is widely accepted as a novel. Varlamova argues that even though we learn a considerable number of interesting things about Sandro, the tales could be arranged in any fashion. Varlamova maintains that they do not have a guiding principle for the development of either the action or Sandro's character. Varlamova feels that Sandro iz Čegema is a series of excellent short stories, full of deep social content, embued with national spirit, which demand

that we think about life and which path we choose--happiness, life in harmony with conscience.

Smelkov also contends that Iskander does not worry about the solidity of compositional ties. The novel is structured like a chain of short stories, each of which could be independent. The action jumps freely from one time period to another. However, despite the compositional weakness, Smelkov insists that the novel is well done. Iskander writes his stories, setting his hopes only on his splendid mastery of the narration, on that very super x-ray vision, worrying only that in each story he is exhaustingly accurate. Taken together these stories form a novel which shows volume, depth, and visibility. The finished product is a magnificently detailed, objective portrait of Sandro of Čegem.

Jacoby concurs with Smelkov. It is her opinion that the novel forms a united whole with the sharp political passages functioning as the counterpoint to Iskander's elegiac descriptions of Abkhazian life.

Part of the loose, annecdotal style comes from Iskander's use of digressions. The digressions, Ascher[60] states, comprise legends, philosophical asides, passionate pleas for humanity, and marvelous peasant and animal wisdom. Laber also indicates that the novel contains stories within stories and more stories within those.

They are woven with humor, sadness, nostalgia, mystery, and flights of fantasy.

Sidorov correctly stresses that Sandro iz Čegema is another work where Iskander moves towards a more objective manner of writing in the third person. Parts of the novel lack the lyrical narrator.

The narrator is viewed by critics to have several major functions. Solov'ev notes that the narrator begins the novel as the biographer of Sandro. By the end of the novel he has switched to the chronicler of Abkhazia. To El'sberg the narrator is a historian. In this role he acts as a middle man between the national culture of the patriarchal society and the culture of a contemporary, socialist way of life. Él'sberg argues that this is evident not just in the narrator's comments on life but also in his intonation; it is as if he were speaking about something almost legendary from the historical past and about someone who lives in the present with us.

Sandro is the central character of the novel. Smelkov singles out Iskander's method of characterization. He states that Iskander draws the portrait of Sandro with the exactness of a conscientious chronicler, using repetition. The repetition is necessary, for the rhythm of the phrase corresponds to the rhythm of the action. Smelkov continues that at first Sandro is almost a romantic figure, who is addressed in a kindhearted, ironic manner.

By the end, Sandro takes himself to be of epic proportions. However, the author treats him in an openly satiric manner. Yet Sandro is not a purely satiric character. The reader does not feel malice towards him. This is due, in Smelkov's view, to Sandro's ineradicable love of life, the reverse side of his egotism. Smelkov takes a Socialist Realist interpretation of Sandro that I can not agree with. He sees Sandro as a sponger, for being tamada is not enough to justify Sandro's life, an important point in Smelkov's analysis of the ending of the novel. Sandro splits into two separate people. Obviously Iskander wanted to describe a man who can not be placed in any formula and who has close relationships with two diametrically opposed people--Tengiz and Sandro's daughter Tali. Tengiz, to Smelkov, represents the primitive, animal side of Sandro. Iskander is merciless in his description of Tengiz. Iskander's laughter turns to scorn here. The other side of Sandro is represented by Tali. She is kindred in spirit, for she too embodies the unending happiness of living. According to Smelkov, Iskander delights in his heroine and here his voice sounds a high, pure lyrical note. This duality makes Sandro an interesting person to observe. Indeed the reader wants to keep watching to try to understand Sandro.

Sandro's life bridges two eras of Russian history, the pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary. Within this

world, Sandro, as El'sberg indicates, has the stature of a patriarch. The same is true of his father Xabug.

Further analysis by Eventov underscores that all plot lines flow into one figure--Sandro, who appears to be the object of the author's humor and the bearer of national sharp wit [ostroslovie]. Sandro iz Čegema is a chronicle of the Abkhazian village Čegem and of its elder statesman and great tamada, Sandro. Eventov feels that Sandro has a special relationship to life. He is able to see both the elevated and the humorous in life, reacting to life's hidden impulses, maintaining his ineradicable optimism, and warming the life of those around him. Sandro's past is drawn in a half fantastic light, yet it is absolutely believable. Sandro has a distinctively national character. He is the keeper of a multitude of stories concerning the life of his native Čegem and Abkhazia. Through his biography, the Abkhazian way of life, national traits, past and contemporary life are revealed.

Several chapters are singled out for individual study. "Belshazaar's Feast" is one such chapter mentioned previously. "Prince Oldenburgskij" and "Tali, čudo Čegema" are two others discussed in some detail.

Burlingame considers "Prince Oldenburgskij" to be the best chapters of the eight published in the Soviet Union. Indeed it is very well-written. The character portrayal of Prince Oldenburgskij, Burlingame states, is excellently

done. The prince is compared to Peter the Great on several occasions. His humorous portrait remains sympathetic. Humorous imagery and anthropomorphism of the swans, pelicans, and herons are very effective here as well. Another factor contributing to the success of this chapter is the fact that it is clearly focused.

Another very successful chapter, in Burlingame's view is "Tali, čudo čegema." It concerns the first sixteen years of the life of Sandro's daughter Tali. This provides the chapter with thematic unity often lacking in other chapters.

Solov'ev considers this chapter to be the best in the novel. By the end of the novel, Tali is the heroine. She feels the love of life within herself--the sweet, golden, still-untasted summer day. Here she reminds the reader of Natasa Rostova of Tolstoj's War and Peace.

El'sberg too admires this chapter. He considers childhood to be the central theme of this chapter on Tali--its goodness, happiness, and charm. Tali is the natural crown of Iskander's novel, for she embodies all that is good and harmonious plus a love of life. All of these traits are tied to the patriarchal way of life in which she was born.

The theme of the Abkhazian way of life is important in this work, a fact numerous critics point out. Sergay calls this novel "an exuberant celebration of the

integrity of national cultures, which Iskander observes in their twilight, passing irretrievably into the colorlessness of the modern nation."[61] Frank provides an important addition to this view. She stresses that the portrayal of the problems of a small ethnic group in its endeavors to adjust to the attempts of the Soviet government to graft its politics and technology onto this proud mountain people is a perspective rarely seen in Soviet literature which Russian culture predominates. Laber concludes that this loving portrayal of Abkhazian life is more threatening than Iskander's light-hearted mockery of Soviet bureaucracy for Iskander demands to know what the Soviets will provide in exchange for their vanishing way of life.

Not all criticism has high praise for Sandro iz Čegema. Toomre makes a valid point in her analysis of The Gospel According to Chegem, when she states:

> Some wonderful turns of phrase and delightful glimpses of absurd characters and ridiculous situations are buried here, but to find them the reader must wade through some mighty turgid prose. Disjointed and ill organized, the stories lumber on without much sense of direction. This collection is very uneven and not nearly as successful as Sandro of Chegem.[62]

A few chapters of the second volume of the novel are hard to follow for they contain digressions within digressions, confusing the reader. The remainder of the chapters, however, are well-written and provide excellent reading.

Michael Scammell feels that the comparison of Sandro iz Čegema with García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude is not justified for two reasons. First, in all but two chapters, Iskander uses gentle ridicule not satire to treat dangerous topics. As a result, the characters in Iskander's novel never truly come alive. Second, the novel suffers from "slack and nerveless prose."[63] Scammell feels that the clumsy, anecdotal style must be the result of cultural isolation from the modern movement in fiction.

Conclusion

One can see from Iskander's critical articles that there are three components of good literature that he values above all. They are truth, humor, and the ability to write from one's native roots. These are the same traits which stand out in his own prose. In essence they are the very points the critics make when they analyze Iskander's works. Western and Soviet critics alike emphasize that Iskander's Abkhazian roots are evident in his works with very few exceptions. These lyrical pieces are humorous at the same time. Even the few serious works contain humorous episodes. Iskander is known for the psychological insight in particular into the childhood psyche. Many critics note the moral side of Iskander's prose. His hero is searching for truth and for happiness.

The critics bring out that Iskander directly states his conclusion (moral) at the end of each story.

The reviews of Iskander's works praise his short stories, in particular the autobiographical stories of his youth. Moj djadja samyx čestnyx pravil, Kolčerukij, and Deduška are the stories singled out for special attention. Sozvezdie Kozlotura received almost unanimous praise. The critics regard the povest' to be a unique blend of satire and lyricism. The lone Soviet critical article has little merit; while Byron Lindsey reviewed the English translation and found that non-Soviet audiences would be unable to appreciate its topical humor. However, he offered little evidence to support his criticism.

Sandro iz Čegema is highly praised by all critics but one. The individual chapters are excellent, forming a biography of Sandro and a chronicle of Abkhazian life. At the same time, the critics correctly point out the structural weaknesses, stating that the single focus of Sandro is destroyed by having him disappear from one chapter and play a marginal role in others. Joyce S. Toomre criticizes the second part of Sandro iz Čegema as disjointed and poorly organized.

The most divided reception was accorded Morskoj skorpion, his least characteristic work, which contains little of Iskander's famous humor. It is both praised and condemned for its series of reminiscences dealing with

"banal topics" during Sergej's search for happiness in love. Even those critics who praise it as a very interesting work feel that it is flawed.

The critics admire Iskander's prose. They see him as experimenting in new directions, predicting that he will move away from writing solely from the perspective of an autobiographical, lyrical narrator in the first person, and instead will move toward more third person narratives. The critics are confident that Iskander will produce many more works which will bring enjoyment to a wide audience, both inside and outside the Soviet Union.

Notes

[1]Fazil' Iskander, "Sometimes Losses are More Valuable than Gains," Soviet Literature, No. 4 (1977), pp. 143-49.

[2]F. Iskander, "O novatorstve, banal'nyx istinax i citatax," Literaturnaja gazeta (July 7, 1966), p. 3.

[3]F. Iskander, "Tret'ja kniga poéta," Novyj mir, XLVII, No. 9 (1971), 268-71.

[4]F. Iskander, "Golos Abxazskix uščelij," Literaturnaja gazeta (Nov. 18, 1965).

[5]T. Mamaladza, "Ob očage i dome," Komsomol'skaja pravda (Jan. 8, 1977), p. 2.

[6]F. Iskander, "Pružina jumora," Komsomol'skaja pravda (June 11, 1972), p. 2.

[7]F. Iskander, "Poézija dramy," Literaturnaja Rossija (Sept. 10, 1976), p. 20.

[8]F. Iskander, "V priboe ženščina iz bronzy," Novyj mir, XLV, No. 11 (1969), 237-39.

[9]Ju. Smel'kov, "Plody dereva detstva," Sem'ja i škola, No. 19 (1971), pp. 48-50.

[10]Helen P. Burlingame, "The Prose of Fazil Iskander," Russian Literature Triquarterly, No. 14 (Winter 1976), pp. 122-65.

[11]L. Čertkov, Review of Zapretnyj plod and Trinadcatyj podvig Gerakla, Zvezda, No. 11 (1966), pp. 215-16.

[12]Inna Varlamova, "Cena dobytoj istiny," Literaturnoe obozrenie, No. 2 (1977), pp. 31-34; Marietta Čudakova, "Cena samopoznanija," Literaturnaja gazeta (Dec. 8, 1976), p. 5; I. Vinogradov, "Uxodit' i vozvraščat'sja," Družba narodov, No. 8 (1977), pp. 274-78.

[13]N. Atarov, "Korni talanta," Novyj mir, XLV, No. 1 (1969), 204-09.

[14]Burlingame, pp. 161-62.

[15]Vickie Babenko, "Fazil Iskander: An Examination of his Satire," Russian Language Journal, XXX, No. 106 (1976), 131-42.

[16]I. Longinov, Review of Den' Čika, Detskaja literatura, No. 6 (1972), pp. 53-54.

[17]B. Sarnov, "Čem glubže začerpnut'...," Voprosy literatury, VII (1978), 126-51.

[18]Vladimir Osinskij, "Smešnoe--ne tol'ko smešno," Literaturnaja Gruzija, No. 3 (1979), pp. 112-16.

[19]I. Grekova, "Pod znakom kozlotura," Literaturnaja gazeta, (Nov. 15, 1966).

[20]Vladimir Solov'ev, "Den' byl, den' budet," Družba narodov, No. 5 (1973), pp. 266-69.

[21]Leonid Lenč, "Satira poéta," Literaturnaja Rossija (Oct. 14, 1966), p. 9

[22]Deming Brown, Soviet Russian Literature Since Stalin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 506-09.

[23]Sarnov, p. 129.

[24]Vladimir Solov'ev, "S popravkoj na vremja," Zvezda, No. 4 (1974), pp. 215-18.

[25]Evgenij Sidorov, "Zakaljat dušu smexom," Literaturnaja Rossija, No. 37 (Sept. 13, 1974, p. 14.

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[27]F. Iskander, Utraty, in his Zapretnyj plod (Moscow: Sovetskij pisatel', 1983), p. 235.

[28]M. S. Švarc, Review of Pervoe delo, Literatura i škola, No. 2 (1973), pp. 84-85.

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[30]Kirill Koval'dži, "Skvoznye kartinki," Družba narodov, No. 11 (1966), pp. 281-83.

[31] I. Pitljar, "Neverojatnaja istorija s kozloturom," Sibirskie ogni, No. 4 (1967), pp. 180-82.

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[34]Edward Brown, Russian Literature Since the Revolution, rev. ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1969), pp. 328-29.

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Conclusion

Iskander's prose, as shown in this analysis, reveals a number of themes central to his works. His childhood is a major theme that runs through half his prose. In these autobiographical works, he depicts a boy just entering adolescence who is grappling with life's problems and is growing towards emotional maturity. This major theme encompasses several sub-themes. As he explores his childhood world, Iskander analyzes the relationships among family members. The many facets of childhood friendships comprise another sub-theme. School, an important part of the child's world, is a third sub-theme of Iskander's childhood works. Honesty, a necessary ingredient of all relationships, comprises an additional sub-theme.

Another cycle of works concerns Iskander's adult life. In these works he returns to the themes of friendship and of honesty. Love is an important part of adult life and this theme, particularly the search for love and the trials and tribulations of young love, is central to a number of these works.

Iskander repeatedly digresses from the storyline and chats with the reader. These digressions, frequently about writing, form another important theme. Iskander is an advocate of truth in art. He admires good writing and deplores the present state of writing in the Soviet Union.

The theme of humor is closely connected with Iskander's views on truth in art. Humor is a necessary ingredient of life. He feels that it is his mission to speak the truth in his prose. By writing with humor he will make his message clearly known.

Iskander is a very nationalistic writer and the theme of Abkhazia is the central theme of his prose. Through the lives of his characters, Iskander reveals the history and customs of Abkhazia. Iskander also analyzes the problems that have occurred under Soviet rule. With the many changes which have taken place in Abkhazia, Iskander repeatedly emphasizes that the traditional way of life, which he values highly, is being eroded by progress and the new Soviet way of life. He stresses the necessity to replace these beliefs with others of equal value.

A deep love of nature pervades Iskander's prose, forming another theme, which is closely connected with his love of his native Abkhazia. Nature's beauty, Iskander emphasizes, must also be protected so that it is not destroyed by tourists or poachers.

With Abkhazia a major theme in Iskander's works, all his main characters have their roots firmly planted in Abkhazia. He prefers to depict his own relatives, neighbors, and friends from Sukhumi and the surrounding countryside. Many of these characters reappear in subsequent works, thus forming a network of more than two

dozen characters. This nucleus is chosen for their unique, colorful personalities. Among his family, there are his mother, father, sister, brother, grandmother, aunt, Crazy Uncle Kolja, Uncle Kjazym, and Sandro iz Čegema. His neighbors and friends include: Kolčerukij, The Rich Tailor, the Palmist, and Alixan.

These characters are not the positive heroes of the Socialist Realist tradition. Their lives are ruled by old traditions. As Iskander himself states, he is following the tradition of the little man in Russian literature.

Of course the most important character in his prose is Iskander--as a boy and as an adult. This includes his alter egos Čik, Remzik, Sergej, and Zenon. The boy and adult fullfil an important role in Iskander's prose for they provide an honest emotional response to life around them.

There are several important common traits present in Iskander's characters. Although they may be illiterate, they possess innate wisdom and cunning. These two traits enable them to make their way through life with strength and dignity. In addition, it is clear that Iskander values hard work and a love of the land, prominent characteristics of his grandfather and Uncle Kjazym.

An analysis of Iskander's poetics, which forms a major section of this dissertation, reveals that Iskander writes in a number of genres--the short story, the povest', and

the novel. His prose is structurally complex, with each work exhibiting a wide range of poetic devices.

Language is carefully chosen to achieve a particular effect, be it lyrical humorous, or satirical. Slang, clichés, bureaucratic and journalistic jargon, mis-pronunciations, non-Russian words, and oaths fill the speech of his characters.

Iskander is a careful craftsman. His shorter works are well constructed to produce one specific aim. Foreshadowing is one device used which strengthens the structural and thematic unity.

A variety of narrative styles appears in Iskander's prose. His favorite style is first-person narration. In his autobiographical works, this effectively reduces the emotional distance between Iskander and the reader, thereby establishing sympathy and near-identification. The hero/narrator functions as commentator on the world around him. His honesty highlights falsity in others.

In another group of works Iskander employs third person narration. The young heroes Remzik and Čik appear to be alter egos for Iskander as a boy. Point of view is strictly limited to reveal only those things that the boy would have knowledge of. The narrator allows insight into the young hero's mind, developing sympathy for him.

The main narrator of the novel Sandro iz Čegema is Iskander as an adult, the same narrator from Iskander's

autobiographical works concerning his adult life. He spends much time chatting with the reader. This builds a relationship between the narrator and reader and helps to achieve a casual unity in the novel. However, the narrative style of the novel is complex, shifting from first person to third person. Further variety is exhibited in the chapter Rasskaz mula starogo Xabuga, which is told in first person, from the point of view of a mule.

Digressions are an integral part of the structure of most works and are effectively used for a variety of reasons. They develop the main theme, add an informal chatty tone to the prose, add authenticity, fill in details and background information, provide humor and satire, and relieve tension. These digressions are expertly integrated into the work with few exceptions. However, a number of chapters in Sandro iz Čegema contain numerous digressions, resulting in a fragmented, confusing narrative which mars the structural unity of the piece.

Characterization is one of Iskander's major strengths. In order to develop fully the personalities of his characters, Iskander provides details of their physical appearance. In doing so, he pays particular attention to a character's eyes and eyebrows, noting their size and shape, along with the expression they convey. People frequently converse with their eyes alone. Iskander will

also draw a correspondence between a character and one prominent physical trait or personal mannerism, which may become a leit-motif reflected in those works featuring that character. At times this turns into caricature where a minor character is only identified by the one trait.

Conversations are used to reveal a person's thoughts, opinions, and relationships with others. This, together with his actions, provides additional information to enable the reader to form a well-based opinion of a character. This is aided when the reader is allowed inside certain characters' minds.

Iskander repeatedly places characters in a test situation which forces them to reveal their true selves--their basic honesty or a major personality flaw. Another version of the test employed by Iskander is a test of wits, whereby the clever must prove their intelligence.

Imagery is another important device used for characterization. Similes and metaphors help make actions and emotions more concrete, plus they provide important clues to Iskander's opinion of a character.

Similes and metaphor abound in Iskander's descriptions. The tenor and vehicle are drawn from five sources: the animal kindgom, nature, every-day objects and activities, people, and abstract ideas. Frequently animals are likened to people; such similes have an anthropomorphizing tendency. Conversely numerous similes

liken people to animals, which has a lowering effect and conveys a negative impression of the character. At times such similes are merely humorous, at other times, satiric.

The world of objects is not relegated to function solely as the background. Instead it actively participates in the world created by Iskander. Personification of animals, nature, and objects is an important poetic device, which adds another dimension to his prose.

Iskander adds additional depth to his works through the use of symbol, oxymoron, and ostranenie. His also draws on allusions to other works of literature and art, folk-loric motifs, biblical motifs, and Greco-Roman motifs for the titles of works, similes, and metaphor. These allusions aid characterization, help create a particular emotional tone or atmosphere, and provide comic effect.

Satire is a prevalent trait of Iskander's prose. He uses gentle satire to expose many ills of Soviet society. In Iskander's opinion, it is important for a society to be able to criticize and laugh at its own shortcomings. While satirizing various problems, Iskander criticizes without antagonizing the reader. Instead he amuses the reader, who meanwhile agrees with the criticism of the problem. Iskander's satiric attack becomes sharp and penetrating in Sandro iz Čegema, Sozvezdie Kozlotura, and

Kroliki i udavy. Iskander employs many devices to convey his satiric message. Those devices already mentioned are combined with additional devices: grotesque, hyperbole, irony, allegory, black comedy, dreams, anticlimax, and speaking names.

This study of Iskander's prose reveals that Iskander has followed in the footsteps of many authors in Russian literature. His lyricism and descriptions of nature link Iskander with Turgenev, Čexov, and Bunin. Iskander, like Turgenev in Zapiski oxotnika, captures the colors, sounds, smells, and texture of nature. The names of the plants, animals, birds, and fish are included in these descriptive passages.

Parallels with Tolstoj and Gor'kij are evident in Iskander's use of the boy narrator. The young narrator of each author is naive, yet very intelligent, making penetrating analyses of many situations. The technique of ostranenie, whereby the boy sees the world from a fresh perspective, is a further parallel with Tolstoj.

The strongest parallels with Russian satirists exist between Iskander and Gogol'. Numerous similarities can be pointed out. Iskander's "Southern color" is reminiscent of Gogol''s writing of Little Russia. The narrative tone of both authors is rambling, annecdotal, and sometimes ridiculing. In the writing of both, the narrative contains numerous digressions, which are often lyrical.

Many other devices are employed similarly by these two authors: grotesque, hyperbole, personification, and "speaking names," among others. In Sozvezdie kozlotura in particular, Iskander satirizes the bureaucratic mentality as Gogol' did in Revizor. One major difference must be noted however--Iskander does not demean his characters as Gogol' does. Instead each character maintains his personal dignity.

Iskander's place among contemporary writers belongs, to a large extent, with the village prose writers. Like Kazakov in particular, Iskander dislikes city life. It is the country that refreshes him spiritually. Iskander, together with Kazakov, Astafev, Rasputin, and Nagibin, feels at home among nature; a trait that these authors share with their characters. Their concern is the individual and his values. With major shifts in values occurring, Iskander, in keeping with Rasputin and Astafev, voices his concern about old traditions which are disappearing as the country modernizes.

While Iskander is concerned with the same themes, his works are tinged with satire and humor, making them lighter in tone than the works of other village prose writers. He avoids the depressing tone of Kazakov and Rasputin. The humor and nationalism of Iskander's works set them apart from those of other village prose writers. Indeed this blend of gentle humor and satire is rare in

Soviet writing and sets Iskander apart from all his contemporaries.

Iskander is a mature writer who has been writing prose for twenty four years and who has his own unique, well-developed style. Yet Iskander is not afraid to experiment with new techniques and styles--something he has done in many works. Urok igry v šaxmaty is an experiment with dialogue. Neblagodarnyj prestupnik is a successful use of skaz. Iskander turns to allegory in Kroliki i udavy. While in Džansux--syn olenja ili evagelie po-čegemski, he writes a folk-tale. Recent works also exhibit a move away from first person narration towards third person. By all indications we can look forward to new, interesting works by Fazil' Iskander.

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