L'ANALISI LINGUISTICA E LETTERARIA XXXIII (2025) 25–44
ISSN: 1122-1917

Between the State's Devilish Temptation and the Possibility of Repentance: Cains and Judases in Vasily Grossman's Novel *Everything Flows*

Olga Rosenblum
Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur-und Kulturforschung (Berlin)
rosenblum@zfl-berlin.org

Received July 2024; Accepted January 2025; Published online April 2025

The paper is structured as a slow reading (commentary) in chronological order of those chapter excerpts of Vasily Grossman's last novel, *Everything Flows*, which are devoted to the protagonist's return from the labor camp and his conversations with those outside (chapters 1–14). Over the course of this slow reading, I identify keywords concerning the opposition between soul and body, repentance and penance. Another area of analysis is Grossman's polemic with other Soviet writers who published works about informers and Gulag prisoners. In the first part of the paper, I show that in this polemic, Veniamin Kaverin emerges as a particularly important opponent for Grossman. Reconstructing first the allusions to Kaverin's prose in *Everything Flow*s and then the images of the Judases-informers, I suggest that on the level of images, the novel contrasts the informers Cain and Judas and proposes a classification of the guilt of those who preserved their civic lives over those who spent years in the labor camps.

Keywords: Grossman, *Everything Flows*, Coping with the past, Judas and Cain, Perpetrators

Vasily Grossman began working on his novel *Everything Flows* in 1955, at a time when the return of people from the Soviet labor camps was the most visible sign of change in public life. Only several months later, journals would begin printing poems on the reunion of the returnees and those who had remained, and Anna Akhmatova would utter her (then unpublished but later very famous) statement that "now the prisoners will return, and the two Russias will look each other in the face: the one that put away and the one that was put away" (Chukovskaya 1997, 190). In both cases, opposed to one another though they may be, society was divided into two (and only two) parts and the moment of reunion was problematized in physical and metaphorical terms. Both of these core aspects became the focus of *Everything Flows*[1] and will be examined in this article.

[1] Grossman dated the typescript of *Everything Flows* to 1955–1963 (on Zabolotskaya Manuscript 1963, see: Garrard 1994; Ghini 2016, 363–364; Krasnikova 2021; Calusio 2023), but also worked on the novel in 1964 (Berzer 1990, 249, 259). Hereafter, references to this document are given as: ZM 1963. By page numbers, I

DOI: 10.69117/ALL.2025.1.03

In this paper, I will analyze *Everything Flows* as a means for Grossman to engage in contemporary discourse surrounding the labor camps. This analysis is rooted in two observations: on the one hand, the novel's deliberate reflection of other literary works such as Veniamin Kaverin's *The Two Captains (Dva kapitana)* or Alexander Tvardovsky's *Distance after Distance (Za dal'yu dal')*, and on the other, the novel's symbolic evocations of biblical archetypes of Judas and Cain. I conclude that through these two motifs, *Everything Flows* proposes a categorization of personal guilt that may be either borne or rejected by the 'remainers' – the group of those who had preserved their civic lives at the cost of their soul, and as part of which Grossman may have also counted himself.

1. *A Return to Nowhere*

The novel begins with the return of the main character, Ivan Grigor'evich, to Moscow after "three long decades" of exile and labor camps:

> В Москву хабаровский поезд приходил к девяти часам утра. [...] А поезд уже вошел в зеленый подмосковный пояс. [...] И человек, который *за три долгих десятилетия* ни разу не вспомнил, что на свете существуют кусты сирени, анютины глазки, садовые дорожки, посыпанные песком, тележки с газированной водой, – тяжко вздохнул, убедившись еще раз, по-новому, что жизнь и без него шла, продолжалась. (Grossman 1970, 5, 10. *Emphasis in all the quotes is mine – O.R.*)[2]

But this man, who spent a week on the train from Khabarovsk, does not stay in Moscow even for one night: as their ensuing conversation fails so too, does the return to Moscow, the city containing at once the protagonist's former life and his last surviving relative from 30 years ago. The same is true in Leningrad: the protagonist approaches the house where the woman he loved – the woman who ceased writing letters to him because she had gotten married – lives to this day, only to leave without telling her of his return.

By choosing "three long decades," Grossman evokes the entire period of un-freedom spanning from the death of Lenin to the death of Stalin. Furthermore, by sentencing his protagonist to a term that exceeded even the longest known, Grossman entered into a dispute with his contemporaries who wrote of "seventeen years" and thus began count-

do not mean those from the typescript, where the numbering was rearranged when sheets were added, but as an electronic page, which is available at the following link: <https://grossmanweb.eu/doc/garrard-collection/GROSSMAN_VSE-TECHET_Manuscript_HD.pdf>.

[2] In this paper, quotations from *Everything Flows* are given in Russian. As shown by Grossman's textualists (Calusio 2021; Krasnikova 2021), Grossman was very deliberate and specific in his word choices. Thus, even using the highly accurate translation by Robert and Elisabeth Chandler (Grossman 2009) would have required pointing to the original Russian word each time. See, for example: "[...] with all my heart" instead of "soul" in chapter 6, particularly since analyzing the implication of the corresponding word *dusha* is crucial for this paper, or "Who was guilty [...]" in chapter 7, which transposes the original "kto vinovat" into the past tense, as if the guilt was no longer present (Grossman 1972, 67–68). For consistency, block quotations from other works are also given in Russian.

ing un-freedom only from 1937 onwards[3]. Indeed, one such return after 17 years of labor camps can be found in Alexander Tvardovsky's *Childhood Friend (Drug detstva)*, a chapter from his poem *Distance After Distance*, printed in the first issue of *Literaturnaya Moskva* (which was published specifically for the XX Congress of the Party): the narrator, a famous poet, gets off the train to Vladivostok at the Tayshet station. There, he encounters an old friend outside of a train headed in the opposite direction, from Vladivostok to Moscow. Several parallels exist between the *Childhood Friend* and Grossman's novel: nobody expects the character's return – neither the woman he was once involved with (and who has married someone else in the meantime), nor his mother (who did not survive the years of his imprisonment – Tvardovsky 1956, 502) – but he mentions that he has documents confirming his right to travel there (this cliché can be seen also in: Gulia 1962). However, there is a key difference: in the *Childhood Friend*, as well as in subsequent publications of 1956 (Berggol'ts 1956; Aliger 1956), the main desire of those who remained was to welcome their homecoming loved ones and to restore the correct (Ėrenburg 1956, 34) and even the original state of things (Gulia 1962, 12–15, 106).

I suggest that it was to this template, broadcasting an obvious falsehood, that Grossman responded in *Everything Flows*: according to him, those who had kept their civic lives, did not necessarily support the returnees. Making up for the lost years was anything but easy – it was impossible.

2. *A Return from Nonexistence: The Resurrection of Abel*

An additional possible decoding of the number 'thirty' ("three long decades"), can be deduced from the second chapter, which is devoted to the reaction of the main character's cousin to the news of his return. The chapter begins as follows:

> Прочтя телеграмму, Николай Андреевич пожалел о чаевых, данных почтальону, – телеграмма, очевидно, предназначалась не ему, и вдруг он вспомнил, ахнул: телеграмма была от двоюродного брата Ивана. (Grossman 1970, 11)

Nikolay Andreevich is not expecting his cousin at this time, despite the changes in society that he thinks about (see chapter 3). His cousin returns as if from nonexistence, from another world – it is a resurrection from the dead.

It is worth paying attention to the names that Grossman gave his characters: the name of Nikolay Andreevich's wife is Maria (Maria Pavlovna), while the main character's, his cousin's, name is Ivan (Ivan Grigor'evich). A parallel can be observed in *The Two Captains*, Veniamin Kaverin's most famous novel, completed in 1944, where there were two cousins, Nikolay and Ivan. Ivan was a captain, and an explorer who led a doomed polar expedition along the North Sea Route. Motivated by his attraction to Ivan's wife Maria (Maria

[3] On the much shorter period of exile (not imprisonment) of the protagonist prototype, see Popoff 2019, 282–283. Two alternative return dates for the protagonist are given one close to the other, 1954 and 1955 (Grossman 1970, 31, 35).

Vasil'evna), Nikolay had deliberately supplied his cousin's expedition so poorly that his cousin's (and rival's) chance of return was as good as zero. Thus, Nikolay caused the death of his cousin. In the penultimate chapter of Kaverin's novel, the number "thirty years" is pronounced by the protagonist, Sanya Grigor'ev, in his lecture at the Geographical Society in Moscow, where he talked "about an old-time expedition that ended about thirty years ago" and emphasized that these thirty years should not be considered as long-forgotten and irrelevant past (Kaverin 1946, 551).

Several arguments point to the fact that this combination of the characters' names and the number "thirty years" is not a coincidence but an allusion, a technique deliberately used by Grossman. The first of them is Zaozersky, a rather high-ranking biologist in *Everything Flows*, whom Nikolay Andreevich mentions in chapter 4 (Grossman 1970, 42). Just such a scientist – once again with the same name – appears in the last part of Kaverin's trilogy *The Open Book* (*Otkrytaya kniga*). It is noteworthy that while Kaverin frequently featured scientists as characters, and particularly biologists, in his work, this is not typical of Grossman's work. Thus, the inclusion of the figure of Zaozersky would have been a deliberate choice on Grossman's end; not an inclusion of a regular archetype, but a reflection on and response to the work of his long-time colleague[4]. Therefore, the collaboration between the two authors forms the second reason in favor of Grossman's allusion to Kaverin's work.

The third argument concerns the theme of informers, which appears in both books. It is likely that Grossman turned to *The Two Captains* because he needed an allusion that would allow him to reflect simultaneously on fratricide[5], denunciation, and repentance; the Soviet author who published on repression more than others was Veniamin Kaverin. In his work, the theme of repression was primarily addressed through denunciations. *The Two Captains*, focusing on the late 1930s and also featuring two cousins (two brothers of the second degree), one of whom ends up murdering the other, features the most famous denunciation in Kaverin's prose.

The denunciation in *The Two Captains* is that of Sanya Grigor'ev, written by Nikolay (Antonovich) and his protégé Romashov:

> – ... Письма пишут, – однажды сообщила старушка. – Все летчик Г., летчик Г. Донос, поди! И этот [Romashov] просто из себя выходит – попович-то! А Николай Антоныч молчит. (Kaverin 1946, 369–370)

By describing this denunciation (the corresponding word "donos" appears in *The Two Captains* several times), Kaverin claimed the appropriate authorities did not act upon unjust denunciations, but fair reports. As a result of Nikolay Antonovich and Romashov's denunciation, Sanya's planned expedition and his talk at the Geographical Society were

[4] Note also the timeline of publication: the third part of *The Open Book* was published at the end of 1956 in the second issue of the almanac *Literaturnaya Moskva* (Kaverin 1956, 81–82). Thus, Grossman would have had ample opportunity to change Zaozersky's name in his own draft in the following years – yet he did not.

[5] In Russian, the words for 'brother' and 'cousin' are expressed with the word '*brat*', with the addition of the adjective "*dvoyurodny*" (i.e., "second-degree") in the case of cousin. This enhances the theme of fratricide more than in other languages or translations.

canceled. But Sanya himself does not get arrested, which is apparently due to a thorough investigation into the denunciation, which includes the help of witnesses. Several years later, after a failed attempt on Sanya's life, Sanya returns to Moscow and records Romashov's confession about this denunciation. This leads to Romashov's arrest, followed by an in-depth investigation (Kaverin 1946, 477–478, 545).

At the very same Geographical Society, Sanya publicly accuses Nikolay Antonovich by reading out the papers of Nikolay's cousin Ivan Tatarinov, thus declaring not only to the investigating authorities but also to the public that Nikolay Antonovich bears the blame for the death of his cousin:

> Он [Nikolay Antonovich] шел в полной пустоте – и там, где он проходил, долго была еще пустота, как будто никто не хотел итти там, где он только что прошел, стуча своей палкой. (Kaverin 1946, 555)

It is not said whether the investigation will punish Nikolay Antonovich, but he is obviously punished by society: people turn away from the brother who killed his kin, evoking the biblical motif of Cain becoming a social pariah. Society restores justice in agreement with the state, and the men who attempted to denounce an honest Soviet man are revealed to be a pre-revolutionary hustler and a "popovich," i.e., the son of a priest, who have not been exposed in the wake of the Revolution. Kaverin thus reproduced a commonplace of Soviet ideology: Soviet society does not produce informers, but instead exposes those produced by pre-revolutionary society. Investigation and Soviet society work in harmony, and their work turns out to be accurate – this point was reproduced in mass circulation in Kaverin's adventure novel, well-loved by its readers[6].

In *Searches and Hopes (Poiski i nadezhdy)*, the third part of *The Open Book,* Kaverin again presents a denunciation, once more written by a member of the older generation. This time, the denouncement is not kept to a mere mention, but described in great detail (Kaverin 1956, 251–252). It leads to the arrest of the main character's husband, Andrey L'vov, who returns from the labor camp only after Stalin's death: more than ten years after *The Two Captains*, after Stalin's death and Khrushchev's report on his cult of personality, Kaverin reproduced the same template, albeit with some variations – justice is restored, and it is restored by the state. Society, as a previously important actor in the restoration of justice, is no longer present here. The third actor of the restoration of justice and the (moral) punishment of the informer – private persons, the family – remains relevant. As in *The Two Captains*, where Nikolay Antonovich's wife (formerly Ivan's wife) did it, in *Searches and Hopes* the informer's wife commits suicide[7].

The juxtaposition of *Everything Flows* with *The Two Captains* allowed Grossman to respond to this cliché of a just society: in *Everything Flows*, neither the informer nor any

[6] On the circulation and translation of the novel, see Tatarinova 2019; Kutuzova 2019.

[7] This motif can be seen in Shalamov's story *The Secondhand Book Dealer* (also 1956), in which the wife of a former NKVD investigator dies suddenly, having previously said that she would "hang herself, drown herself" if her husband returned to his former job (Shalamov 1998, 350, 347).

other guilty parties are punished by society or the state – instead, society consists of people usurping their moral or intellectual superiors in the wake of the latters' arrest (Grossman 1970, 33–34)[8]. It is impossible to restore the original fair social situation, Grossman proposes, not only because the past is irreversible but also because neither the state nor society nor even those closest to the repressed seek to restore justice.

The juxtaposition of Grossman's Nikolay Andreevich with Kaverin's antagonist Nikolay Antonovich implies that Nikolay Andreevich is guilty of sending Ivan to the labor camp. But in *Everything Flows*, a separate informer is featured. Nikolay Andreevich, meanwhile, never wrote a denunciation (see chapter 3) and, in fact, had no self-interest in getting rid of his cousin. Why, then, would Grossman present his readers with such a call-back? Is there a different type of guilt, or blame, that Nikolay Andreevich can be accused of?

3. *Unrepentant Cain*

Grossman is interested in the soul, which Kaverin did not write about: what happens to the soul of the guilty when the innocent returns? As previously mentioned, the themes of fratricide – thanks to the semantic proximity between the words 'cousin' and 'brothers' in Russian – and guilt evoke the biblical motif of Cain and Abel. Could Grossman be referring to Cain and Abel? Could he be using this reference to pose the question: "Once Abel has returned from the other world – what will Cain do?"?

The third chapter of the novel is devoted to Nikolay Andreevich's inner preparation for the arrival of his cousin. The very first sentence introduces the word "*pokayat'sya*" ("to repent," "to be penitent") phonetically linked in Russian to the name Cain (the word "*pokayat'sya*" – a significant substitution! – replaced the word "*rasskazat'*" in the typescript; ZM 1963, 10):

> Николай Андреевич, ожидая двоюродного брата, думал о своей жизни *и готовился покаяться в ней Ивану. Он представлял себе, как будет показывать Ивану дом. Вот в столовой текинский ковер, черт, посмотри, красиво ведь?* У Маши хороший вкус, не секрет от Ивана, кем был ее отец, а в старом Петербурге, слава богу, понимали толк в жизни.
> *Как говорить с Иваном? Ведь прошли десятилетия, жизнь прошла. Нет, о том и будет разговор, – не прошла жизнь! Только теперь начинается она!*
> Да, это будет встреча! Иван приезжает в удивительное время, сколько после смерти Сталина перемен. Они коснулись всех. И рабочих, и крестьян. Ведь хлеб

[8] See the fragment about how Nikolay envied the scientists Mandel'shtam and Radionov, who then lost their jobs among "cosmopolites" and "weismannists" (Grossman 1970, 16–17). It is likely that the reference to *The Two Captains*, in which Romashov confesses his envy of Sanya (chapter "The Shadow"), originally implied Grossman's idea of envy as the motivation that drives the informer. Grossman also removed the words of Nikolay's wife, who compared her husband to Mozart and Ivan to Salieri (ZM 1963, 53). It can be assumed that Grossman darkened the literary connotations of envy he had introduced into the novel, leaving Cain and Abel. According to the Jewish religious texts, Abel was much stronger than Cain, just as Ivan was stronger than Nikolay.

> появился! И вот Иван вернулся из лагеря. И не он один. И в жизни Николая Андреевича произошел многое определивший перелом. (Grossman 1970, 15)

Whose speech is the one in this excerpt, which opens the chapter? It is not an inner monologue: the third-person narrator reports that Nikolay Andreevich *(hereafter in the paper – Nikolay)* wants to repent, but Nikolay keeps switching the subject of his thoughts to the carpet and interior design of his flat. Ivan is "arriv[ing] at an amazing time" – this is apparently Nikolay's agitated assessment, but the last sentence of the passage quoted above returns to an outsider's view of him. The voices of the narrator and the character are thus intermingled to the point that the reader cannot always distinguish between them.

Though the narrator has introduced the theme of repentance for which Nikolay has been preparing, no repentance is present in Nikolay's own thoughts – there is, instead, vanity: thoughts about Ivan are replaced in Nikolay by thoughts about himself, an occurrence that happens not once, but twice in the first three paragraphs of this chapter alone. Just as Nikolay has taken someone else's position in the workplace and achieved status and prosperity solely due to the arrest of his betters, Nikolay's thoughts about himself take the place of his thoughts about Ivan.

Usurping another's place in society, usurping another's place in one's own thoughts, allowing oneself to think and feel what one seemingly does not believe in – what is described here is the intrusion of the external world into the internal world, and, since Grossman conceptualizes the state with the agency of a single actor which a person allows into their inner world, into their soul, it reflects the inner bond between a person and the state.

The following excerpt shows only the state (and not Nikolay) in the process of penance, though "a repentant, agonizing feeling" "struggles" in the soul of Nikolay:

> Пятого апреля Николай Андреевич разбудил утром жену, отчаянно крикнул:
> – Маша! Врачи *не виноваты!* Маша, их пытали!
> *Государство признало свою страшную вину*, – признало, что к заключенным врачам применялись недозволенные методы на допросах.
> После первой минуты счастья, светлой душевной легкости, Николай Андреевич неожиданно ощутил какое-то незнакомое, *впервые в жизни пришедшее, мутное, томящее чувство.*
> Это было *новое, странное и особое чувство вины за свою душевную слабость, за свое выступление на митинге, за свою подпись под коллективным письмом*, клеймящим врачей-извергов, *за свою готовность согласиться с заведомой неправдой*, за то, что это согласие рождалось в нем *добровольно, из глубины души.*
> Правильно ли он жил? Действительно, как все вокруг считают, был он честен?
> *В душе силилось, росло покаянное, томящее чувство.*
> В тот час, как *божественное непогрешимое государство покаялось в своем преступлении*, Николай Андреевич почувствовал его *смертную земную плоть*, – у государства, как и у Сталина, были сердечные перебои, *белок в моче*. (Grossman 1970, 28–29)

But what does the word "*pokayalos'*" mean in this excerpt? Did the state truly repent? Or is this act of penance merely performative?

The choice of words seems odd: why does Grossman not follow the already established tradition of blaming 'officials', those 'bureaucrats' portrayed by Il'ya Ėrenburg (*Thaw*, 1954) and Vladimir Dudintsev (*Not by Bread Alone*, 1956) as responsible for the repression enacted at the levels under their command? Why does he describe the 'state' – something that is so multi-faceted, so multi-subjected – as a singular subject? I propose that in order for him to describe a person's *moral dependence on the state*, the state *had* to be whole – to be a subject.

Applying the word *pokayat'sya* to the state is also noteworthy. The Russian word *pokayat'sya* does not necessitate a differentiation between internal (repentance) and public (penance) acknowledgment of one's own guilt. However, the article on the doctors' release (The Doctors' Plot) that Nikolay reads in the country's leading newspaper *Pravda* (Soobshchenie ministerstva... 1953) does not allow the word *pokayat'sya*, as applied to the state, to be understood as 'repenting': it describes an institution, which was dissolved on the day of Stalin's death (the Ministry of State Security) and not liquidated at all, but rather subsumed by another (the Ministry of Internal Affairs under Lavrenty Beriya), having conducted the investigation with "the use of unauthorized [...] techniques." At that time, reports exposing saboteurs were common, as they signaled a restoration of the norm (justice). No repentance as such, nor repentance from the state exactly is implied – only penance in public.

I suggest that Grossman's focus is on the "soul" – on what a person such as Nikolay is to do, if he "voluntarily, from the depths of the soul," supports the state and loves his brother, who also "meant" much "to his soul"? (Grossman 1970, 11). If so, the question Grossman poses in the chapters centered on Nikolay can be decoded as follows: what can a person do when a murdered brother returns and the state has publicly acknowledged its guilt, even if only once and not in its entirety? What can a person do whose soul is bound to both the returning brother and the state? What can a person do if they have let the state into their soul and allowed it to replace their brother? Will they repent?

4. *Temptation by the State. Open Letters as One of Its Means*

A recurring motif can be observed in *Everything Flows*: the guilty characters talk about their souls instead of the body, though their behavior and actions are markedly influenced by the latter, not the former. What is referred to by their high-sounding words is, in truth, not only physical but shameful. This applies to both Nikolay and the "divine infallible state" which turns out to be made up of "earthly flesh" containing "urine," which in turn contains "protein clots:" not only is the state not a real God, it is also capable of sin (Grossman 1970, 29). Nikolay is revealed to have followed the rules of a false god instead of true divine commandments:

> Ох, и неприятным оказалось это саморазглядывание: неимоверно паскудным был мерзостный список.
> В него вписались и общие собрания, и заседания Ученого Совета, и торжественные праздничные заседания, и лабораторные летучки, и статейки, и две книги, и банкеты, и хождение в гости к плохим и важным, и голосования, и застольные шутки, разговоры с завотделами кадров, и *подписи под письмами*, и прием у министра.
> Но в свитке его жизни было немало и иных писем: тех, что не были написаны, хотя Бог велел их написать. *Было молчание там, где Бог велел сказать слово*, был телефон, по которому обязательно надо было позвонить, и *не было позвонено*, имелись посещения, которые *грех было не совершить* и которые *не были совершены*, были *непосланные деньги*, *телеграммы*. Многого, многого не было в списке его жизни.
> И нелепо было теперь, голому, гордиться тем, чем он всегда гордился, – *что никогда не донес*, что, вызванный на Лубянку, отказался давать компрометирующие сведения об арестованном сослуживце, что, столкнувшись на улице с женой высланного товарища, он не отвернулся, а пожал ей руку, спросил о здоровье детей. (Grossman 1970, 30)

At a later point, Ivan refuses to take Nikolay's "suits," which he has offered "from the bottom of his soul" (Grossman 1970, 41) – the very soul that Nikolay has let the 'state' into. On a typed version of the same page, Grossman made two significant edits: first, he added *otvetstvennost'* (ZM 1963, 28), once more harkening back to the central theme, and second, he replaced the enumeration of "jacket" *(pidzhak)* and "pants" *(bryuki)* with the word "suit" (*kostyum*, costume). It is for this reason that Ivan refuses to accept that which covers up Nikolay's connection to the state. The word "depravity" *(nepotrebstvo)*, which appears as the last word of chapter 7, refers to this image of a naked man. In biblical terms, this depravity does not mean an exceptional indecent act of an otherwise righteous person (Noah), but the constant behavior of someone who has let the corrupting state into their soul. Moreover, this depravity is shared by many: it's "*our* human depravity," "*nashe* chelovecheskoe nepotrebstvo," that Grossman refers to (Grossman 1970, 71).

What Nikolay is guilty of is not only what he has done but also what he had in mind, yet has not done in spite of God's will, which Nikolay could and should have recognized. The image of such a person, together with the word "sin," evokes the biblical serpent who tempted Eve and, once more, her son Cain, to whom God said: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it" (Genesis 4:7). Just as Eve and Cain had agency over their moral actions, so too did Nikolay, who instead of "ruling over" the sin, allowed the state-serpent into his soul and contributed to the state's deeds.

The letters to his arrested cousin that remained unwritten (Grossman 1970, 30) were ordered into existence by God, and it is this order that Nikolay defied. But there is one letter that bears Nikolay's signature: it is through letters that the novel juxtaposes the guilt of those who wrote denunciations, i.e. also letters (of which Nikolay was not guilty), and those who signed open letters (of which he was guilty). It is exactly that signature on an

open letter that Ivan will ask about in the next chapter, and it is Nikolay's answer to that question that will cause Ivan to refuse to spend the night at his cousin's[9]:

> А Иван Григорьевич, уже зная, что не облегчение, а новую тяжесть принес ему приход к брату, хмуро спросил:
> – Скажи-ка, ты подписал то письмо, осуждающее врачей-убийц? Я об этом письме слыхал в лагерях от тех, кого все же успели сменить.
> – Милый чудак ты наш... – сказал Николай Андреевич и запнулся, замолчал.
> Внутри у него все похолодело от тоски и одновременно он чувствовал, что вспотел, покраснел, щеки его горели.
> Но он *не упал на колени*, он сказал:
> – *Дружочек ты мой, дружочек ты мой*, ведь и нам нелегко жилось, не только вам, там в лагерях.
> – *Да Боже избави*, – поспешно сказал Иван Григорьевич, – *я не судья тебе, да и всем вам. Какой уж судья, что ты, что ты.* Наоборот даже... (Grossman 1970, 44–45)

In anticipation of his cousin's arrival, Nikolay has been preparing to "confess to Ivan all the torments of conscience" (Grossman 1970, 39), but when a person with the right to ask what Nikolay had done in those years broaches the subject, Nikolay does not find it in himself to either repent or, at the very least, answer the question directly.

A similar motif can be seen in another novel by Grossman, *Life and Fate*. The storyline of Viktor Shtrum, one of that novel's main characters, to whom Grossman has attributed some of his own life circumstances, ends with his signature on a letter of protest to the English scholars who claimed that the USSR had "repressed thousands upon thousands of people for political crimes" (Grossman 1990–2, 335). Letters frame the story of Shtrum: after signing this dishonored open letter, he thinks of his mother's farewell letter to him, written before the ghetto shooting that kills her, and laments his lack of strength compared to hers. The recurrent theme of signing open letters explains why the writer Grossman – who claimed to be writing an epic on the scale of Leo Tolstoy and reflected on the Bible with thoughts on what sin and repentance are – nonetheless referred his readers to a social-realist adventure novel: after all, Kaverin (and also Ėrenburg) did not sign the letter demanding punishment for the arrested doctors and suggesting the deportation of Soviet Jews to the Far East – but Grossman did (Kaverin 2002, 325–330, on p. 329, the person who suggested signing this letter is called "Judas;" Thun-Hohenstein 2010, 237).

Everything Flows thus served a dual purpose: on the one hand, Grossman denied Kaverin's statements that the denunciations were properly evaluated by the investigators, that justice was truly restored by the very joint efforts of the investigation, society, and family members, no less. On the other hand, addressing Kaverin in the context of this theme of

[9] The theme of refusing to share food and drink as refusing to receive communion with evil is also present in Shalamov's above-mentioned short story, *The Secondhand Book Dealer*. The theme of refusal to "take the Buffalo sacrament" is central to Heinrich Böll's novel *Billiard at Half-Past Ten* (1959), published in the USSR in 1961 (Böll 1961).

signed open letters, Grossman acknowledged – as publicly as it was possible at the moment, and also for his future readers – that in another situation of moral choice, and even in more dangerous one, Kaverin's choice was more decent than his own.

5. *Unrepentant Judas, Repentant Cain*

"Who is to blame, who will bear responsibility..." *(Kto vinovat, kto otvetit...)*: this is the beginning of chapter seven, the chapter on the four Judases (Grossman 1970, 59). Both questions are answered in the chapter, which is framed by two chapters on the informer Pinegin – the only one of Ivan Grigor'evich's old acquaintances he encounters in Leningrad after his departure from his cousin in Moscow.

Within Grossman's classification, Pinegin is unambiguously one of the Judases – he has performed an act of denouncing. There is a passage in the novel that highlights Pinegin's resemblance to Nikolay, who, as previously established, may be equivocated with Cain: both attempt to buy their way out of their guilt to Ivan with material gifts – suits in the case of Nikolay and money in the case of Pinegin. Both claim that their gift comes "from their (whole) soul." Equally from the bottom of their souls, the "SekSots [*sekrentye sotrudniki*, i.e., secret agents] and informers," i.e., Judases, ask about the reasons for their "weakness" in chapter 7. However, Pinegin is much further from repentance than Nikolay – whereas Nikolay had a "tormenting sensation" *(tomyashchee chuvstvo)* when he thought about the sins of the state and his own nudity, Pinegin's torment occurs in the restaurant after his encounter with Ivan, when he is faced with the agonizing decision between ordering "domestic meat or game" *(zatomilsya mezhdu myasom i dich'yu)*. The "split" within Pinegin that the waiter discovers by chance has nothing to do with his soul; his "shame" emerges not from the act of denunciation itself, but from his fear of his act being known to Ivan (Grossman 1970, 68, 29, 74, 58). The images of these two men, Nikolay and Pinegin, correspond to the biblical idea of the availability of repentance for Cain and Judas: Judas, having realized his guilt, accepts his fate and punishment (rather, punishes himself), thus excluding the possibility of doing any work to change his "direction of movement," of metanoia, which is a necessary precondition for repentance. Cain, according to the Christian understanding, is not clearly described as having successfully walked the path of repentance; rather, according to the Jewish understanding, if he was killed by a descendant, then his sins would be forgiven, which probably implies his repentance. Similarly, just as Pinegin has not made any attempt to change his "direction of movement," Nikolay has, at the very least, made an attempt to do so.

At the same time, Grossman's characterizations of Judases and Cains at times go beyond their Old and New Testament equivalents: the degree to which their deeds are voluntary (Cain/Nikolay signs what is offered to him – a collective letter; Judas/Pinegin writes a letter himself – a denunciation) is what they are differentiated by; what they share, is being spared from biblical punishment. There is no condemnation from others to send the Soviet Cain out into the world to roam endlessly, and there is no inner feeling within the

Soviet Judases that causes them to realize the extent of their guilt and, like in the case of Judas Iscariot, hang themselves.

Neither Nikolay nor Pinegin repents or at least owns up to their guilt, and neither do the four Judases whose imaginary trial is described in chapter 7. The only admission of guilt found within this chapter belongs to the narrator and explicitly refers to the real-life author, not to a character, not to a first-person narrator:

> *Да, да, они не виноваты*, их толкали угрюмые, свинцовые силы, на них давили триллионы пудов, *нет среди живых невиновных. Все виновны*, и ты, подсудимый, и ты, прокурор, и я, думающий о подсудимом, прокуроре и судье.
> Но почему так больно, так стыдно за наше человеческое непотребство? (Grossman 1970, 71)

The shameful things Nikolay attributes to himself (banquets, published books, signatures on letters, etc., as cited above) can be attributed to the real-life author Grossman, too. To some extent, Nikolay is his alter ego. But if this is the case, then the question arises: whose voices sounded in Nikolay's soul and mingled in the third chapter? These were the voice of the third-person omniscient narrator and the voice of the character, but the voice of the devil who tempted Nikolay must also be present in Nikolay's soul. Is it possible that the voice of the third-person omniscient narrator was the voice of the devil? Or that the third-person omniscient narrator spoke to the devil in Nikolay's soul? Or that the devil also resounded in the soul of the real-life author? In any case, the literary device of chapter 3 is repeated in chapter 7: the voices are intertwined, and Nikolay's alter ego, who is apparently also Cain, not Judas, comes out to repent in public.

This public aspect of repentance is crucial, for, in Judaism, a person who has committed a sin does not confess to a rabbi, but repents to those he has harmed. This is exactly what Grossman shows in the novel: the two people who had caused harm to Ivan spoke to him and did not repent. They spoke to him in the fall (Grossman 1970, 5), which may even be a reference to the period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, when one must repent in order for God to forgive the sin. Nikolay and Pinegin did not take this chance. But if this is a Jewish tradition, why is the repentance I have called "real-life author's repentance" done publicly? It can be interpreted in the following manner: because the sin of the signer of the open letters – the sin of the writer whose books have been published in large numbers – can only be absolved by repenting before the readers of his open letters and novels. In a situation where everyone is guilty and there is no earthly authority to judge, the only possible path is voluntary repentance in front of the whole world. If everyone is guilty, it means that everyone is capable of bearing responsibility. As Abel returns from the labor camp, Cain is capable of reflecting on what he has been doing during Abel's absence and writing a novel about this reflection, exploring the mechanisms behind his own conformity in detail.

6. *Christ or Abel? Pure or Sinful, Divine or Human?*

Two sets of images are alongside each other in the novel: Abel / Cain and Christ / Judas.

While the question of which authority has the right to judge and pronounce verdicts was already hinted at in the novel's earlier chapters, it becomes the main focus in chapter seven, which describes an imaginary trial in which the "informers and SekSots" refuse to admit their guilt, claiming that their "freedom of choice is putative," that "people were eliminated using a statistical method" (Grossman 1970, 67). There is a "defense" and a "prosecutor" at the trial, but there is no judge, and this bench corresponds to what the accused say:

> Почему же вы, *соучастники*, должны судить нас, соучастников, определять нашу вину? Понимаете, в чем сложность? Может быть, мы и виноваты, но *нет судьи, имеющего моральное право* поставить *вопрос о нашей виновности*. Помните, у Льва Николаевича: нет в мире виноватых! А в нашем государстве новая формула – *все, миром, виноваты, и нет в мире ни одного невиновного.* (Grossman 1970, 69)

The four Judases (informers) claim that only the dead could judge them (Grossman 1970, 69) – does this imply that Ivan Grigor'evich could fulfill that role, whom the Judas Pinegin (much like the Cain Nikolay), considered dead *("Perevod iz mertvykh dush v zhivye!",* Grossman 1970, 57) and whom Anna Sergeevna, in her penance (see further analysis of chapter 14), compares to Christ resurrected? Nikolay, who prepared to repent, also acknowledged his cousin's right to judge (Grossman 1970, 39).

Yet, Ivan Grigor'evich refuses the right to judge his cousin ("I am not a judge of you, nor of all of you," chapter 4), evoking Christ's sermon "Judge not, lest ye be judged" (Matthew 7:1). This allusion, suggesting that the same measure for moral requirements should be applied to oneself as to others, can be interpreted as Ivan Grigor'evich's refusal to recognize himself as Christ-like because he does not consider himself to have experienced the full measure of suffering. More was experienced in the labor camp by the women and the dead, most of all by the women who died. It may well be for the sake of this very statement that the 13th chapter on Mashen'ka Lyubimova ends with the words "And Ivan Grigor'evich thought that in the Kolyma penal colony a man is not equal to a woman – after all, a man's fate is easier" (Grossman 1970, 114).

But the very chapter on Mashen'ka (chapter 13) suggests Ivan's omniscience, which further weighs in favor of a comparison between him and Christ: he thinks of Mashen'ka, a prisoner in the women's camp, whose fate should by all means be fully obscured to him. In the next chapter, Ivan's comparison with Christ becomes even stronger: it is expressed by Anna Sergeevna.

Christ or Abel? Both connotations are present in the novel. The figure of Abel appears in another work by Grossman, namely, his short story *The Sixth of August (Shestoe avgusta)* about American pilots dropping an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. This story, written in 1953, was published in 1956 in the first issue of the almanac *Literaturnaya Moskva* without the crucial part of the title, *Abel*. A "twenty-two-year-old bombardier," Joseph Connor

(Grossman 1956, 507), who presses the button and thus destroys Hiroshima, claims in a conversation with other crew members the next day that Abel (equivocated with himself) was not much better than the Cain he killed (equivocated with those who lived in Hiroshima). Moreover, it is Abel who turns out to be the murderer:

> – Авель, Авель, где брат твой Каин?
> – Каин обычный паренек, не многим хуже Авеля, и город был полон людей вроде нас. Разница в том, что мы есть, а они были. Верно, Блек? Вель ты сам говорил: пора подумать обо всем. (Grossman 1956, 522)

Given that the creation periods of *The Sixth of August* partially overlap with that of *Everything Flows*, it is undeniable that the motif of Cain and Abel was present in Grossman's mind. Yet, when he needed the image of the brothers in *Everything Flows*, Grossman found it necessary to refer his readers to *The Two Captains*, rather than reinforce the Cain-and-Abel-comparison present in his own prose. I suggest that he did this because the image of a guilty Abel was inappropriate for his novel about former prisoners. In *Everything Flows*, Abel, who returned from the labor camp, is not a murderer, he is not guilty of what he was accused of by the investigators (Grossman 1970, 77). The characters of *Life and Fate*, Krymov and Abarchuk, continue their inner search in the labor camp, but they are by no means sinless in contrast to Ivan Grigor'evich. Is it possible that by showing a man returning from the labor camp, Grossman has shown a man who has been purified there? This would be in keeping with the Jewish tradition, according to which a soul that has gone to hell is purified in 12 months – much less than the 30 years of Ivan Grigor'evich's prisons and labor camps.

Regardless, if there is no innocent judge in the trial of the Judases, if even a man who has passed through the camp, who has been purified there, refuses his right to judge, is there any punishment for Judas and Cain? This is what Anna Sergeevna says, repeating the words of Ivan Grigor'evich:

> Я спросила, как немцы могли у евреев детей в камерах душить, как они после этого могли жить, неужели ни от людей, ни от бога так и нет им суда? А ты сказал: суд над палачом один — *он на жертву свою смотрит не как на человека и сам перестает быть человеком, в себе самом человека казнит*, он самому себе палач, *а загубленный остается человеком на век*, как его ни убивай. (Grossman 1970, 118)[10]

The Judases and, apparently, the Cains, having let in the state which tempts like the devil, have lost within themselves the very humanity that the camp prisoners, shrouded from the state's temptation, preserved or perhaps regained through the path of purification. This

[10] Here, Grossman also responds to Yuri Pilyar's books, where this theme means that even the arrested must be treated as human beings (Pilyar 1956, 3–4) and that remaining human means resisting in the underground (Pilyar 1963).

image does not contradict Ivan's comparison with Christ, but only confirms it: Christ was at once a perfect God and a perfect man.

But the ones who have executed their humanity can resurrect it within themselves. Anna Sergeevna describes how she was "bewitched" *(okoldovany)* while in the "asset" *(aktiv)*: she stopped viewing the kulaks, i.e. peasants who did not want to be a part of kolkhoz, as human beings, thus becoming like the Germans in the Third Reich who killed the Jews, whom she mentions in the same conversation. Then, she describes her transformation back into a person *(raskoldovalas')*: she "saw people" and chose a vocation more removed from the influence of the 'state' (left the kolkhoz chair to become a cook; Grossman 1970, 118–119). Her repentance is the second one; the first belongs to the novel's "real-life author." According to the classifications of repentants in the novel, these two repentants are not equal: the first repentant (chapter 7, "real-life author") is Cain-like, and the second (chapter 14, Anna Sergeevna), as I will show in the next section, is Judas. Ultimately, then, even Judas has the opportunity to repent, although in the Gospel he does not.

7. *The "Judases" among the "Pack Leaders," "Comrades" and "Activists"*

The belonging of Anna Sergeevna to the "Judases" can be seen by comparing chapter 14 with her repentance and chapter 7 with the four Judases (on the comparison of Anna Sergeevna with Pinegin and Nikolay see: Calusio 2013, 62).

The number 'four' is no coincidence: in Grossman's later prose (*Life and Fate*, *Everything Flows*), the classification of four appears from time to time, but at least three times in the context of perpetrators – those who have committed an act whose degree of reprehensibility and, thus, blame, still needs to be examined[11]. The absence of such a neutral concept in Russian provokes a search either for words that already imply a definite evaluation of the deed (such as 'criminal') or, in Grossman's case, for metaphors (such as "Judas"). The three words Grossman initially chose for his classifications of those whose degree of guilt is precisely at issue were also neutral (the one chronologically first, to a lesser extent) and contained a characterization of their social status: "pack leader" *(vozhak)*, "comrade" *(tovarishch)*, and "activist" (or, more precisely, a member of the "*aktiv*").

"Judases" replaced "comrades" (ZM 1963, 72, 73, 74, 77): a very significant substitution, suggesting that the Christian connotations that seem to be at the core of the novel were not present in its original conception, nor at the beginning of the active period of work on it after the 1961 search of Grossman's apartment by KGB. By the time the "comrades" became "Judases," they had already been described in detail: the one who denounced under torture; the cynic from whom "no testimony was extracted, he himself showed ingenuity"; the one who denounced on principle; the one who denounced for the sake of gain (Grossman 1970, 59–66).

[11] See the 4 types of queues in starving Ukraine in Anna Sergeevna's story: Grossman 1970, 129; see on 4 levels of freedom: Maddalena 2018.

These four types are partly – but not entirely! – repeated in Anna Sergeevna's description of the members of "aktiv":

> И я в активе стала. А в активе всего было: *и такие, что верили и паразитов ненавидели, и за беднейшее крестьянство, и были, что свои дела обделывали, а больше всего, что приказ выполняли* — такие и отца с матерью забьют, только бы исполнить по инструкции. (Grossman 1970, 118)

Both classifications, especially the one in chapter seven, which explicitly employs the term "Judases" and is more visible for the reader, with a clearer differentiation between the types, call back to a classification Grossman proposed in *Life and Fate*. The four types of "comrades" ("Judases") present here, however, do not quite coincide with the four "characters" of "pack leaders" of National Socialism who "led the people's breath, the motherly feeling, the range of reading, the plants" (Grossman 1990–1, 458) in *Life and Fate*.

The pack leaders of the first type are "integral natures," "devoid of mental acuity," "earnestly" catching "slogans" "from the newspapers" and from those above like Hitler and Goebbels; they are modest, they are at the very bottom of the party hierarchy. "At the highest rungs" of it are the pack leaders of the second type: "intelligent cynics" who "laughed at the leader and at high ideals." The pack leaders of the third type are "cheerful masters," and from the point of view of Sturmbannführer Liss, Hitler, the one above those "at the very top," combines the characteristics of the first and third types, and Adolf Eichmann, who at first seemed to Liss to be of the first type, seemed to him to be Hitler's equal after he told him exactly how many Jews were murdered. The fourth type of pack leaders – executors, indifferent to the idea but interested in dachas, dinner sets, and jewelry – bears an obvious parallel to the fourth Judas, who is also interested in goods (Grossman 1990–1, 458–459).

Does the number "four" have any other function than to refer to *Life and Fate*? Do these four perpetrators refer to the four people in the train compartment in the first chapter of *Everything Flows* on the train from Khabarovsk to Moscow? Do they refer to the Haggadah with four verses from Deuteronomy, four sons, four glasses of wine read at Seder, the Passover meal (which would also become the Last Supper)? Is a reference to the four Gospels possible? Is it possible that Grossman knew Karl Jaspers' *The Question of German Guilt,* in which Jaspers distinguished 4 types of guilt attributable to the Germans according to the consequences of their actions and instances thereof (see quoted above: "*vopros o nashej vinovnosti,*" "the question of our guilt," Grossman 1970, 69)?

Some of these assumptions seem possible, but not entirely convincing. One of the four passengers in the compartment is Ivan, who is neither a pack leader, nor a Judas, nor an activist; the typescript in which Grossman changes "comrades" to "Judases" already contains four types of activists in Anna Sergeevna's memoirs, so it is likely that this "typologization" originally had no Christian connotations; hypothetically, Grossman could have known Karl Jaspers' book, published in 1946, i.e. when the Nuremberg Trials were underway with representatives of the USSR there, including Grossman's co-editor of *The Black Book,* Il'ya Ėrenburg. A correlation with the classification proposed by Jaspers can be seen in *Everything*

Flows (4 types of guilt: legal, moral, political, and metaphysical, i.e. the guilt towards God), but I have found no conclusive data about Grossman's acquaintance with Jaspers' work.

What I can assume with great certainty is that Grossman, like anyone of his generation who grew up in a Jewish place, no matter how religious the family, was familiar from childhood with the Haggadah, which tells of the miracle of deliverance from slavery, and it is to the theme of freedom and slavery that a considerable part of the chapters of *Everything Flows* is devoted. My ultimate proposal is that the typology of four that Grossman identified in *Life and Fate* and repeated in *Everything Flows* originally symbolized certain integrity for him, a system that he saw first through the prism of Judaism and later (also) through the prism of the Gospels, of which there are also four.

8. *Conclusions*

I suggest that the four figures of perpetrators were Grossman's way of showing to the potential future reader of his two latest novels that after *Life and Fate*, in his further reflection on the responsibility of a perpetrator, he shifted the focus from 'the state' to 'society', asking a new question about how exactly the Judases, the Cains, and society as a whole were related to the 'state'. To the scholarly dispute over whether Grossman absolves his Judases of responsibility by shifting it to the state (see the polemic with Tzvetan Todorov by Guillaume and Finney: Guillaume, Finney 2013), I would like to add that in *Everything Flows,* Grossman suggests a gradation of individual guilt (primarily through the contrast between the guilt of Cain and that of Judas) and points out that both the individual and society as composed of individuals have a space within which they can make choices; for the decision made within this space – to commit or not to commit an act? To allow the state to tempt or not? To repent or not to repent? – he puts the responsibility on the individual. Grossman's reflections on responsibility (state, society, and individual) can also be seen as continuing his polemic with Kaverin.

Continuing *Life and Fate*'s theme of signatures on open letters allowed Grossman to shift another focus – from the inner torment and remorse of the signatory of a dishonorable letter who cannot find the strength to admit to those closest to him what he has done (Shtrum) to the long path of repentance (Nikolay) that yet can be passed till the public penance. It was no coincidence that Grossman, as the real-life author, gave both Shtrum and Nikolay some of the biographical traits of his own life.

The theme of (un)repentance, like the theme of brothers and fratricide, refers to Cain and Abel, although (unlike the names of Christ and Judas) these names are not explicitly stated in the novel itself, but in a short story Grossman wrote at the same time he began working on the novel. As with the four perpetrators and the recurring theme of a signature to an open letter, Grossman's motif of the two brothers helped him to refer his future readers to his earlier prose and to the third shift in focus: this time from the murdered Cain, who avoids the long road of repentance (*Sixth of August*), to the Cain who has the opportunity to walk it *(Everything Flows*).

The religious connotations of the novel, which come not only from Christianity but also from the Tanakh and Jewish prayers, are not always precise. This is why I wish to suggest that Grossman, like some other contemporaries of his reflecting on the crimes of Stalinism and Nazism, regardless of their religion and even if they were religious, used these connotations as a language, a horizon, a system of images that he lacked for this theme[12].

Some other points in *Everything Flows* are reminiscent of the Western cultural discourse, which Grossman could not have known about at all, or at least not in detail – discourses on collective guilt and denial thereof (Jaspers 1946; Adorno 1954); on studies of conformity, which intensified with the Second World War (Fromm 1941; Milgram 1965); on the question of the banality of evil (Arendt 1963).

The third context in which Grossman's novel is set alongside Western contemporary and religious contexts is Soviet literature from the 1940s to the 1960s. In *Everything Flows*, Grossman identified and responded to some clichés of published Soviet literary works about repression: he described the perpetrator's (informer's) unrepentance, instead of his moral defeat, at his encounter with those returned from the labor camp (Kaverin, Gulia, D'yakov); the preservation in a labor camp of freedom and humanity, instead of happiness (Gulia) and willingness to fight underground (Pilyar); the perpetrator's envy of the former prisoner, who was free in the labor camp from the temptations of the diabolical state, instead of envy of the perpetrator as the reason for his denunciation (Kaverin).

The camp returnees can return to themselves, i.e., to the person they were before[13], since they have preserved themselves. Those tempted by the devilish state also have the opportunity to return to themselves – but only if they repent and free their souls from the state. In this case, the possibility of reuniting those who spent years in labor camps and those who kept their civic lives exists, but it is near to nonexistent: Grossman, perhaps understanding his diagnosis, did not give a life after repentance to Anna Sergeevna, the second repentant present in the novel after Grossman, the "real-life author," as the first. Whatever the repentants could hope for, Grossman seems to have found no other way out for society than an attempt at repentance by the few who might be willing[14].

[12] See Primo Levi on Cain in the "Shame" chapter; see the motif of communion in Shalamov and Böll, whose works Grossman may have known.

[13] On the ending of the novel, its title, and the image of the "prodigal son," see Ghini 2018.

[14] I owe a great deal to several interlocutors who have made crucial contributions to my understanding of sin, temptation, and repentance in Judaism and Christianity. I am very grateful to the participants in the discussion of this paper at Georgetown University, and especially to Olga Meerson, who suggested distinguishing between the concepts of repentance (personal, not public, a long journey that is a prerequisite for metanoia) and penance (public, including insincere: confession of guilt by the state or by prisoners in public trials). I am especially grateful to Quill Kukuj for thoughtful proofreading that, at various stages of drafting this paper, revealed not only its linguistic shortcomings but also some of its substantive ones.

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