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Daughter, Daughter, Why Did You Leave Me? The Loss of a Child and the Crisis of
Answerability in Konstantin Vaginov's *Bambocciada*

The tragic loss of a child's life, a girl's life in particular, is a recurring motif in the Russian prose of the Soviet period. Complementing the fallogocentric paradigm of fathers and sons, the motif of motherless daughters and daughters that will never become mothers due to a premature death complete, as it were, the age-old theme of the broken link of times known from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The Modern era, having disposed with God, adds to it a strong sense of *bogoostavlennost'* [the state of being abandoned by God]. The once rebellious generation of revolutionaries end up as orphaned parents: the past departs in the company of the future, their own children.

Konstantin Vaginov's novel *Bambocciada* (1929-30), composed as a patchwork of dark anecdotes, features one of such stories concerning an aging father mourning the death of his daughter that had occurred years ago. Mixing fact and fiction according to the logic of dreams, the author endows the suffering father with the initials and the last name of V. V. Ermilov, a literary critic engaged with Stalin's regime and famous for his ominous role in persecuting writers. Put in charge of the girl's development, much like the Soviet critic in charge of literature, the father ends up neglecting the child and prostituting her to various authorities, while remaining completely blind to his own actions. The epitome of his denial is the father's refusal to read the girl's diary under the pretext of posthumously respecting her privacy.

The current paper proposes to read Vaginov's work as the artist's contemplation on the key concepts of Mikhail Bakhtin's early treatise, *Art and Answerability*, familiar to the novelist through his numerous encounters and conversations with M. M. Bakhtin in the mid-1920s.