Evgenii Zamiatin (1884-1937) wrote his brilliant dystopian novel in 1920-21. Banned in the Soviet Union, the work was already translated into English, Czech and French before 1930, and by now it has appeared in ten languages. Finally, in 1952, the Chekhov Publishing House in New York printed the Russian original. The novel continues to be a rich source for interpretive studies in comparative literature, politics, philosophy and psychology. Most readers of the English translation will depend on two readily available versions, those by Gregory Zilboorg or Mirra Ginsburg. The dramatic personae in the novel have names which consist of letters and numbers. Significantly, the letters are a combination of Latin and Cyrillic, but this distinction is lost in these English translations where only the Latin equivalents are used. The novel is rife with symbols, but the symbolic value of the names Zamiatin employs has been virtually ignored in the criticism. The author's work, which has been described as "overloaded with verbal expressiveness and imagery," prompts the following interpretation of the letter/number names in We.

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1. Alex Shane, in his very thorough study of Zamiatin (The Life and Works of Evgenij Zamjatin [Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1968]), discusses the history of the manuscript and provides an extensive bibliography of works by and about Zamiatin.

2. Christopher Collins summarizes thirty-eight works about Zamiatin at the end of his excellent monograph: Evgenij Zamjatin An Interpretive Study (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1973). Collins acknowledges that this selection may not be the best work on the author, but, "some are representative of standard approaches to Zamjatin, others were chosen because they offer unusual interpretations or furnish information not found elsewhere." (p. 107) His brief synopses of these critical studies emphasize the approach of the critic.


4. One nod in this direction is given in a footnote in Shane's book (p. 161); his observations will be incorporated into the following discussion.

Briefly, *We* is a journal consisting of forty "records" or entries, written by D-503, a mathematician and builder of the spaceship "Integral." He lives in the One State, a terrifying utopia of the future where the citizens are ruled by the mysterious Benefactor (Благодатель, translated as "Well-Doer" by Zilboorg) and watched over by a network of spies. Life in the glass-walled state is rigid and uniform: a table of hours regulates life even to the point of sexual activity, for which pink slips are issued. D-503 eventually falls in love with I-330, who brings turmoil to his thoughts and life. (I-330 is a leader of the Mephis, those individuals who survived the great Two Hundred Year War and live in the woods beyond the Green Wall which encloses the One State.) A rebellion by the Mephis, who have infiltrated the One State, is put down; D-503 recants and undergoes the Great Operation (ostensibly something on the order of a double lobotomy) and I-330 is put to death.

The seven characters who are mentioned by a letter/number designation appear in the Russian text as follows: Д-503, 10 (no number), Ф (no number), 0-90, I-330, R-13, and С-4711—that is, three Cyrillic letters, three Latin letters and one, 0, which is ambiguous because it could be interpreted as belonging to either alphabet. (The odd numbers designate males, and the even, females.) Thus the author has set up a fascinating puzzle for the reader. The fact that Zamiatin was an engineer, suggests that his choice of numbers was not just random, but rather, that they have a function in the novel's symbolic system; the Latin letters are probably not whim either for Zamiatin knew English well.

The narrator's letter designation is open to various interpretations. As Alex Shane has pointed out, the "philosophic nucleus of the novel stems from Dostoevsky's works." The obvious parallel is between Zamiatin's protagonist and the author of *Notes from Underground*, i.e., the underground man himself. Thus, his Д may be linked in the reader's mind to Dostoev-

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6. Ginsburg's translation of *Edinoe gosudarstvo*. Zilboorg translates it as the "United State"—which makes for tempting analogies with the United States, but does not convey the meaning of the Russian as well. Shane uses the "Single State."

7. Thus the number of his entries (forty) is significant. It represents a period of probation and trial, as with the Israelites' forty years wandering in the wilderness; Moses' forty days on Mt. Sinai; the forty days and forty nights of the flood; Christ's forty days in the wilderness; the forty days of Lent. An interesting study of number symbolism may be found in *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961).

8. "Their name, the Mephis, is derived from another of their literary ancestors, Mephistopheles, 'der Geist, der stets verneint', of Goethe's *Faust."


10. See "E. Zamyatin's *We*" in *Notes from Underground*, i.e., the underground man himself.