

**The Drama in Disguise: Dramatic Modes of Narration and Textual Structure in the  
Mid-Nineteenth-Century Russian Novel**

by

Kathleen Cameron Wiggins

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Committee in charge:  
Professor Irina Paperno  
Professor Luba Golburt  
Lecturer Anna Muza  
Professor Peter Glazer

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## Abstract

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Professor Irina Paperno, Chair

My dissertation investigates the generic interplay between the textual forms of drama and the novel during the 1850s, a fertile “middle ground” for the Russian novel, positioned between the works of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Gogol and the psychological realist novel of the 1860s and 70s. My study begins with Turgenev’s *Rudin* (1856) and then considers Goncharov’s *Oblomov* (1859) and Dostoevsky’s Siberian novellas (1859), concluding with an examination of how the use of drama evolved in one of the “great novels” of the 1860s, Tolstoy’s *Voyna i mir* (*War and Peace*, 1865-69). Drawing upon both novel and drama theory, my dissertation seeks to identify the specific elements of the dramatic form employed by these nineteenth-century novelists, including dramatic dialogue and gesture, construction of enclosed stage-like spaces, patterns of movement and stasis, expository strategies, and character and plot construction. Each chapter examines a particular combination of these dramatic narrative strategies in order to pinpoint the distinct ways in which the form of the drama aided writers in their attempts to create a mature Russian novel. I also address the ways in which both characters and narrators discuss and make reference to drama and theatricality, revealing their ambivalence toward a genre and expressive mode in which they themselves participate. Finally, my dissertation traces a trajectory in the use of dramatic modes of narrative throughout the decade of the 1850s; while Turgenev, Goncharov, and Dostoevsky foreground their use of drama, Tolstoy strives to place his under disguise. As a whole, my dissertation seeks to add to our understanding of the enigmatic rise of the Russian novel in the nineteenth century by illuminating the importance of the dramatic form in this process.

To my parents, with gratitude.

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## Introduction

In a sense, the history of the Russian novel begins with its absence. While the writers of European nations such as England, France, and Germany had already been establishing a novelistic tradition since at least the eighteenth century, Russian writers and critics, who read, wrote about and even translated these texts, felt themselves miserably behind in producing their own novel. By the 1830s and 40s, the rallying cries of “u nas net literary” (“we have no literature”) and “u nas net romana” (“we have no novel”) were echoing throughout the pages of the thick journals published in the capitals and throughout the salon gatherings of the intellectual elite.<sup>1</sup> In the wake of three inimitable works (Pushkin’s novel in verse *Evgenii Onegin* (*Eugene Onegin*, 1825-1832), Lermontov’s chain of tales *Geroi nashego vremeni* (*A Hero of Our Time*, 1841), and Gogol’s epic in prose *Mertvye dushi* (*Dead Souls*, 1842)) and the death or decline of the writers who produced them, Russian critics and writers were at a loss as to how to construct their own novelistic tradition.<sup>2</sup> This perceived lack created a critical and creative fervor to fill the void by establishing a unique and decidedly Russian novel, one that would replace the numerous popular imitations of Western novels, such as those in the style of Sir Walter Scott. This enigmatic rise of the Russian novel is the larger problem from which my study takes its departure.<sup>3</sup>

This part of the narrative of nineteenth-century Russian literary history is well known and frequently treated by scholarship, as is the triumph of the mature Russian novel of the 1860s and 70s, marked by such masterpieces as Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* (1873-1877) and Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov* (*Brat’ia Karamazovy*, 1878-1880). My dissertation, however, focuses on the middle ground of the 1850s, the gap between the masterful novelistic hybrids of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Gogol, and the revered tradition of the late nineteenth-century Russian novel. Focusing on these intermediary attempts at creating a Russian novel, my dissertation poses the following questions: what are the steps between the impassioned cries for a Russian novel in the 1840s and the realization of that goal in the 1860s and 70s? What tools and elements of other genres, specifically, the form of drama, did aspiring novelists rely upon to create their texts? What is not fully developed in the novel of the 1850s that we find successfully employed in the novel of the 1860s and 70s?

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<sup>1</sup> The highly influential critic Vissarion Belinskii began making this pronouncement in his very first critical article “Literaturnye mechtaniia: Elegiia v proze” (“Literary Dreams: The Elegy in Prose”), published in the journal *Molva* (*Rumor*) in 1834.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that all three of these early exemplars of the Russian novel relied heavily on other literary forms: poetry, the chain of tales, and the epic, respectively. These texts already indicate in the 1830s and 40s the generic uncertainty that I focus on in the novels of the 1850s.

<sup>3</sup> The rise of the novel, and the rise of the Russian novel in particular, is a well-established scholarly paradigm. The most central study of the rise of the Western novel is Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957). Some years later, Richard Freeborn published his study of the paradigm within the Russian tradition, *The Rise of the Russian Novel: Studies in the Russian Novel from Eugene Onegin to War and Peace* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973). More recently, William Mills Todd has offered a succinct overview of the nineteenth-century Russian literary landscape in his essay “The Ruse of the Russian Novel,” in *The Novel, Volume 1: History, Geography, Culture*, ed. Franco Moretti (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 2006), 401-423.



Before answering these questions, however, we must consider the Russian literary landscape of the 1850s. The long gap in the development of the novel coincided with the time when the rule of censorship limited literary production, following the European revolutions of 1848. Fearing the fomentation of ideas dangerous to the monarchy, the Tsar formed a special committee (the Buturlin Committee) to oversee the censors. This doubly severe censorship left writers feeling restrained from free expression until the death of Tsar Nicholas I in 1855; the period 1848-1855 is thus referred to as the “tsenzurnyi terror” (“censorship terror”) or the “mrachnoe semiletie” (“dark seven years”). Two texts from 1847 are generally considered possible contenders for the title of Russian novel (Alexander Herzen’s *Kto vinovat?* (*Who Is to Blame?*) and Ivan Goncharov’s *Obyknovennaia istoriia* (*An Ordinary Story*), but after these two works, there is nothing comparable until after 1855, when the censorship was lifted.

Novelists of the 1850s thus found themselves facing the same critical urgency to produce a distinctive Russian novel as in the 1840s, if not a stronger one, given the increased sense of having fallen behind the European novelistic tradition by almost another decade. Given this situation, the novelists made use of a number of techniques that eventually became essential elements of the mature Russian novel. Although the generic makeup of the novel is notoriously broad and varied, taking cues from such traditions as the epic, the historical chronicle, and the epistolary form, I will focus on the use of one literary form in particular: drama. It is undoubtedly a key aspect of the mature Russian novel, woven in as a structuring device (as, for instance, in the scandal scenes of Dostoevsky’s full-length novels) and even more so as both a space and a thematic element (consider the scenes that take place at the opera and the theater in Tolstoy’s novels, or the constant discussion of performances in Turgenev’s). The influence of drama, as textual form, space, and theme, is an essential part of these novels, as readers and scholars have noted for over a century—it is one of the critical components of the mature Russian novel.

There was a time, however, when these generic elements did not blend so well into the novel as a whole. The novels of the 1850s on which I will focus illustrate cases in which this amalgamation did not occur smoothly—when, instead of melding into one distinctive whole, they remained separate entities within one text. Drama is just as much a part of the Russian novel of the 1850s as it is of the novel of the 1870s—not in the mature and sophisticated way in which we see it in the latter, but in an uneven and not entirely successful way. In the mature novel, the authors have learned how to make the narrator and the characters perform, how to create an audience within the text, and how to draw the reader in as an audience member. These aspects are not fully developed in the novel of the 1850s, although, as my analysis shows, the resulting imbalanced aesthetic is different for each author and each text.

My dissertation focuses then on the false starts and slow beginnings of the novel for four famous writers—either with their early texts preceding their more successful novels (in the case of Turgenev and Dostoevsky) or with the rocky early sections of longer novels which became more sophisticated as they grew (in the case of Goncharov and Tolstoy). The works that I deal with are not the strongest texts or sections of texts produced by these writers, but their hesitant experiments with the elements of drama reveal a crucial step of these authors’ workings with this form within the nineteenth-century Russian novel. I study the intertwining of drama and the Russian novel at its

halfway point, still at a stage of bewildered beginnings, during the decade when it was still struggling to define itself and still grappling with genre.

There are three major works on drama and the novel that provide the foundation for my analysis. The first is Peter Brooks' seminal work *The Melodramatic Imagination* (1976).<sup>4</sup> Brooks' argument treats the specific genre of melodrama in the novel in a defined historical period, post-revolutionary France. The revolution, he maintains, destroyed what he calls "the Sacred" and its representative institutions, the Church and the Monarchy, leaving France in an uneasy state that rendered the literary form of tragedy invalid. Melodrama, he continues, stepped in to fill the gap of sacred meaning, with its excessive gesture and emotion standing in for what he refers to as "the moral occult," the moral absolutes that are no longer possible in earnest and open display, but which may only be hidden behind the Manichaeism of melodrama, with its clearly defined heroes and villains. Taking Balzac as one of his central examples, Brooks then argues that the novel adopts the tropes of melodrama to invest itself with the significance it needs in order to be a successful and meaningful literary form.

Although the historical situation is very different in Russia, where both Church and Monarchy remained undisturbed until the Bolshevik Revolution, Brooks' analysis of the ways in which melodramatic structures, character types, and gestural patterns are subsumed into the Western novel nonetheless provides an excellent model for my investigation of the use of drama in the nineteenth-century Russian novel. The motivation is very different indeed—since Russian novelists were not trying to invest their works with a sense of significance gleaned from melodrama, but rather grasping at the straws of drama to provide structural and narrative templates to the nascent form of the Russian novel—but the methods of incorporating stage forms into the pages of the novel are quite similar.

The second work is Konstantin Mochul's classic *Dostoevskii: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (*Dostoevsky: His Life and Work*, 1947).<sup>5</sup> Mochul's exhaustive text covers the entirety of Dostoevsky's oeuvre, but most importantly for my purposes, he expands upon Vyacheslav Ivanov's concept of Dostoevsky's "novel-tragedies," and his analysis details how the form of the tragedy is incorporated, in terms of both form and content, into Dostoevsky's mature novels.<sup>6</sup> He identifies Dostoevsky's use of the classical unities (time, place, and action), but also the psychological and moral focus of the tragedy as translated into a prose format. Mochul's analysis indicates that the form of the tragedy was not lost in Russia, as it was in France after the revolution, but that the Russian novelist was able to use the same methods in incorporating a different dramatic genre into his works. Dostoevsky's mature novels are offered as exemplars of the hybrid genre of the novel-tragedy, and Mochul's analysis of how expertly the genres are blended in these texts allows me to ask how the theatrical elements work in Dostoevsky's earlier work, in which he is less successful at achieving a seamless mixture of the genres.

The final text is a more recent study of drama in the works of both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, Ekaterina Poliakova's *Poetika dramy i estetika teatra v romane* (*The Poetics*

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976; reprint, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Konstantin Mochul'skii, *Dostoevskii: zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (Paris: YMCA, 1947).

<sup>6</sup> Viacheslav Ivanov, "Dostoevskii i roman-tragediia" ("Dostoevsky and the Novel-Tragedy") in *Sobranie sochinenii* (Brussels: Foyer Oriental Chrétien, 1987), 4: 401-444.

of *Drama and the Aesthetics of Theater in the Novel*, 2002).<sup>7</sup> In addition to her very useful summary of the theoretical implications of combining the novel and drama, spanning from Hegel to Bakhtin, she focuses on the masterful use of dramatic tropes and structures in *The Idiot* and *Anna Karenina*, touching specifically upon the categories of space and action, as well as narrative point of view. She also thoroughly considers how the relationship between author, character, and reader changes depending on which genre dominates in the text, and how the elements of drama are transformed when placed into a prose format. Here again, I am able to work backwards from Poliakova's excellent analysis, identifying what is achieved and what is missing in the melding of the genres of drama and the novel in the earlier works of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy on which I focus.

Building upon what these scholars have done for the mature Russian and European novel, my dissertation turns its attention to the preceding decades, when the Russian novel was still developing. While many scholars have noticed dramatic and theatrical moments in the Russian novel of this period, they have been largely treated as isolated incidents (for instance, the classical unities in Dostoevsky and Turgenev, and the theatrical behavior of Tolstoy's characters). My dissertation takes their work as a point of departure for outlining and defining a consistent pattern of engagement with drama in the process of the creation of the Russian novel.

How exactly do I define the use of the drama in the Russian novel of the 1850s? I make a distinction between the terms "dramatic" and "theatrical" for two reasons. The first is that I am working with dramas as texts and not as live performances. Secondly, the term "theatrical" frequently has a connotation not associated with the theater as such, but with any type of contrived behavior; see, for instance, Elizabeth Burns' definition of the term: "[theatrical] behavior can be described as 'theatrical' only by those who know what drama is [...] Behavior is not therefore theatrical because it is of a certain kind but because the observer recognizes certain patterns and sequences which are analogous to those with which he is familiar in the theater [...] it attaches to any kind of behavior perceived and interpreted by others and described (mentally or explicitly) in theatrical terms."<sup>8</sup> I use the term "dramatic," on the contrary, to refer to specific strategies of constructing a text. My dissertation identifies specific elements of dramatic form, including dramatic dialogue and gesture, construction of enclosed stage-like spaces, patterns of movement and stasis, expository strategies, and character construction. Each chapter examines a specific combination of these dramatic strategies—structural, narrative, spatial, metaphorical, and thematic. In addition to the novelistic texts, my dissertation explores letters, essays, memoirs, and works of criticism that detail the novelists' experience with the theater and their developing attitudes toward it, particularly as they were composing their novels. In the case of those novelists who also wrote plays, I examine their use of dramatic elements and structures in both genres.

In terms of literary theory, my dissertation draws upon both novel theory and drama theory. I rely upon Bakhtin's famous conception of the novel as an omnivorous genre and use several other works that deal specifically with narrative.<sup>9</sup> Dorrit Cohn's

<sup>7</sup> Ekaterina Poliakova, *Poetika dramy i estetika teatra v romane* (Moscow: RGGU, 2002), 112-135.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 12-13. I am grateful to Boris Wolfson for recommending this work.

<sup>9</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epos i roman" ("Epic and Novel") in *Voprosy literatury i estetiki* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura 1975), 447-83.

*Transparent Minds* (1978) is invaluable in defining the role of the narrating consciousness in different types of prose, poetry, and drama. Percy Lubbock's classic work *The Craft of Fiction* (1957), which draws heavily upon Henry James' narrative concepts of the scene and the picture, provides a very useful analysis of the range of the presence or absence of the narrator in prose.<sup>10</sup> In terms of drama theory, my dissertation draws upon Manfred Pfister's exhaustive work *The Theory and Analysis of Drama* (1988), which treats every aspect of drama on which I focus: narrative, space, movement, and character construction.<sup>11</sup> I also refer to Eric Bentley's classic text *The Life of the Drama* (1964), which remains an excellent overview of the modes of dramatic expression.<sup>12</sup> Whenever possible, I read these works of novel and drama theory against each other, providing two perspectives on the texts I examine.

Chapter 1 focuses on one of the first texts to emerge after the lifting of the censorship: Turgenev's *Rudin* (1856). This text is of particular importance not simply because it is Turgenev's first novel, but also because it falls squarely into the era of his transition from writing plays (1846-52) to writing novels (1850s-70s). In locating traces of the dramatic within this peculiar novelistic text, I focus in particular on the issues of narrative voice, interiority of characters, and plot construction. Of equal importance is the fact that *Rudin* openly betrays a self-consciousness of its dramatic underpinnings, as its characters and its narrator discuss and make reference to both the theater and theatricality, revealing their ambivalence toward a genre and expressive mode in which they themselves participate. These moments in which Turgenev productively negotiates a textuality that finds itself somewhere between prose and drama are key factors in defining his paradoxical relationship to the use of the dramatic within the novel. While my analysis of *Rudin* indicates that Turgenev has not yet mastered the incorporation of drama into the novel, I also consider a few of his more successful later works in this regard: *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* (*Nest of the Gentry*, 1859) and *Ottsy i deti* (*Fathers and Sons*, 1862). In these texts it is evident that Turgenev has moved beyond his first attempts at the form, in which drama plays an unwieldy role, to a sophisticated composition that smoothly incorporates both dramatic tropes and structures and a strong and authoritative novelistic narrative voice.

Chapter 2 treats Goncharov's popular novel *Oblomov* (1859), focusing specifically on its unsteady beginnings. The lengthy composition history of the text makes it an excellent case study for the development of Goncharov's narrative techniques; having published the fragment "Oblomov's Dream" to great critical acclaim in 1849, he was unable to complete the novel for an entire decade. A text composed over such a long period of time inevitably raises a number of questions: How did Goncharov stitch the disparate sections of the novel together? How did he ensure the continuity of characters, introduced in 1849 and fully revealed in 1859? And finally, what factors allowed the novelist to move beyond his difficulties and complete the text? This chapter

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<sup>10</sup> Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 255.

Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (New York: Viking Press, 1957), 69.

<sup>11</sup> Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, trans. John Halliday (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 2-4.

<sup>12</sup> Eric Bentley, *The Life of the Drama* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), 78.

considers the generic mode of drama as an answer to these questions. Numerous dramatic elements in the novel are investigated, from the opening “parade of guests” through the languid protagonist’s bedroom to the construction of an enclosed stage-like space, patterns of movement and stasis, and repetitive verbal exchanges; these aspects of the text are examined as markers of a comedy written into *Oblomov*. While Part I of the novel was considered, both by the author and by critics, as the weakest link in the text, Goncharov quickly moved his characters out of Oblomov’s bedroom and into the surrounding world, where the narrative abandoned the strictures and repetition of Part I and yet retained a sophisticated dramatic nature by incorporating the comedic exchanges of Oblomov and his servant, Zakhar, as a constant theme and an exemplar of Bergson’s notion of the mechanization of the comic.<sup>13</sup> My reading of *Oblomov* is illuminated by Goncharov’s reflections on his writing process and placed within the context of his individual experience with drama, and, more specifically, with comedy.

The third chapter focuses on some of the early novelistic attempts of Dostoevsky, specifically two works written just after the writer’s return from Siberia: *Diadiushkin son (Uncle’s Dream, 1859)* and *Selo Stepanchikovo i ego obitateli (The Village of Stepanchikovo and its Inhabitants, 1859)*. While there is an established critical consensus that Dostoevsky’s mature novels are highly dramatic, with their frenzied scandal scenes and their resemblance to classical tragedy, as first observed by Vyacheslav Ivanov, my chapter seeks the beginnings of this dramatic style by focusing on several of Dostoevsky’s earlier attempts to use elements of the dramatic form in works of prose that precede the longer novels. These novellas provide a perfect case study of the early stages of Dostoevsky’s experimentation with the dramatic aesthetic in the novel because they were actually initially planned as dramatic works, but Dostoevsky transformed them into prose during the process of composition. The novellas betray their dramatic underpinnings in ways that differentiate Dostoevsky from Turgenev and Goncharov; while the latter employ strategies from classical drama, Dostoevsky incorporates elements of the popular forms of vaudeville and *balagan* (the Russian popular puppet theater tradition). These “vaudevilles in prose” provide numerous points for examination of the generic interplay between drama and prose, but chief among them are the construction of plot and character, along with narrative structure and dialogue.

The final chapter treats the early sections of one of the most acclaimed Russian novels of the nineteenth century, Tolstoy’s *Voyna i mir (War and Peace, 1865-1869)*. While the first installments of the novel were not published until the 1860s, Tolstoy began working on the text as early as 1855, and thus the long-spanning work offers a perspective on the evolution of Tolstoy’s conception of his work and its narrative, shape, and structure. Tolstoy’s work has met with much criticism, but perhaps none so vehement as that having to do with the issue of genre. Early readers were very displeased with Part I of the novel, which was published in 1865 under the title “1805.”<sup>14</sup> It was not a novel, they claimed, but something more like a sprawling family memoir; they could not tell which characters were important, and none of them seemed significant enough to make the salon scenes in which they participated worthy of the title of the novel. *Voyna i mir* does represent the author’s first attempt at a new and more lengthy form, and I argue that

<sup>13</sup> Henri Bergson, *Le Rire* in *Œuvres* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959), 383-485.

<sup>14</sup> Henry James, “Preface to *The Tragic Muse*,” in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces* by Henry James (New York: Scribner, 1934), 84.

in his reliance upon gesture and dialogue to depict the interiority of his characters in Part I, he is leaning upon a dramatic mode of narration. Of course, Tolstoy does not hold his narrative tongue for long, and, as the novel develops and continues, his narrative voice moves forward from behind the curtain, where we must look hard to find it in Part I, to center stage in his masterful interior monologues, and, of course, in his historical and philosophical treatises in the second epilogue. My chapter focuses on the early plans and manuscripts of the text to illuminate Tolstoy's interest in the dramatic form, which is so evident in the less successful opening pages of the novel, but which fades away as Tolstoy learns to employ drama as a metaphor and a space and to blend it perfectly with his novelistic narrative voice. Tolstoy's experience with and rapidly shifting attitudes toward the theater during the stages of the planning and composition of *Voyna i mir* serve as a backdrop for the investigation of the novel, particularly its early sections. Tolstoy's dramas of the 1850s are also examined for points of commonality with his novel.

Taken as a whole, my dissertation provides an illustration of the evolution of the use of drama in the nineteenth-century Russian novel, and thus seeks to add to our understanding of the difficult beginnings of the novel in Russia. What is most striking about the generic hybridization of drama and the novel in the 1850s is how isolated and unbalanced the two elements remain, in contrast to the mature novel of the 1860s and 70s. The novel of the 1850s is akin to the beginning stages of a stew, in which all of the components remain individual entities that have not had time to meld into one whole. In the decades that followed, however, Russian novels had time to slowly simmer, becoming one masterfully integrated whole.

## **Chapter 1: “Turgenev: Drama v forme romana (Drama in Novelistic Form)”**

It has become something of a critical commonplace to refer to Turgenev’s novels as dramatic. While such observations are often made in passing, there is much more to be explored when this dramatic characterization is taken literally and placed within the context of Turgenev’s literary development. Because he was a playwright long before he was a novelist, Turgenev’s critical and literary writings provide an excellent case study for the use of the dramatic form in the mid-century attempts to create the Russian novel. What is it about drama that helped Turgenev transition into writing novels?

The best place to begin is with Turgenev’s first novel, *Rudin* (written 1855, published 1856), which falls squarely into the era of his transition from writing plays (1846-1852), to writing novels. *Rudin* is a hybrid text, one that makes use of both dramatic and novelistic devices, all the while negotiating its own complex relationship to the theatrical and dramatic form from which it takes so many of its cues. My analysis of this narrative mode is structured in terms of both presence and absence: the absence of a pervasive narrative voice and interiority of characters, and the presence of many monologues, dialogues, and meticulously reported external details. The dramatic form is also present in the text in its plot, narrative structure and devices, and on a thematic level. *Rudin* openly betrays a self-consciousness of its dramatic underpinnings, as its characters and its narrator discuss and make reference to both the theater and theatrical behavior, revealing their ambivalence toward a genre and expressive mode in which they themselves participate.

As a counterpoint to Turgenev’s first novel, I trace the development of his dramatic novelistic aesthetic through two of his later novels, *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* (*A Nest of the Gentry*, 1859) and *Ottsy i deti* (*Fathers and Sons*, 1862). To return to the larger narrative of the rise of the Russian novel, my analysis identifies Turgenev’s specific place in this trajectory and considers his novels as one concrete example of the ways in which early Russian novelists employed dramatic modes of narration in creating an authentic Russian novel.

### **Turgenev as Playwright**

Turgenev’s works allow for quite a unique case study in generic trajectory, as his periods of engagement with various forms of writing were so clearly defined. He started his literary career as a poet, then moved on to drama and short tales, and finally to the novel. Given the critical pressure to produce a Russian novel and Turgenev’s own difficulty in achieving this task, his dramatic writings were a significant stepping stone on the way to his novels. In the short span of six years, 1846-1852, Turgenev wrote ten plays, the most successful of which was his only full-length play, *Mesiats v derevne* (*A Month in the Country*, written 1848-50, published 1855).<sup>15</sup> Several aspects of this play suggest that Turgenev was already occupying a space somewhere between the novel and drama, such as his innovative use of stage directions. While typically used sparingly to

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<sup>15</sup> Many of these plays were short, experimental pieces, focused more on human interaction within enclosed spaces than on “action” in the traditional sense. Richard Freeborn provides an excellent overview of these plays in his essay “Turgenev, the Dramatist” in *Critical Essays on Ivan Turgenev*, ed. David Lowe (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1989), 102-117.

provide information about physical movements or tones of speech, the stage directions in *Mesiats v derevne* go much further. There are far more of them than in Turgenev's other plays or in other contemporary dramas; they almost rival the dialogue with their intense attention to physical detail. Given the overwhelming number of silences in the play (some conversations contain as many as four), it is fitting that in these intervals when only the body can speak, it does so in such an eloquent way. Eric Bentley's assessment of such plays applies very well to Turgenev's career: "[...] the play with excessive stage directions [...] may well indicate that the author is a novelist who has not found himself."<sup>16</sup>

This statement seems all the more true when we consider the content of the stage directions. Moving beyond gestures, entrances, and exits, they tread deep into the realm of psychological narration, which is not typically found in drama of this period. Consider the following few examples: "с притворно-смирненным видом" ("with an affectedly meek air," 2: 297), "С сильным внутренним волнением" ("with intense suppressed feeling," 2: 491), "с притворным равнодушием" ("with affected indifference," 2: 356), "поднимает взоры к небу, как бы желая отчуждиться от всего, что происходит вокруг нее" ("raises eyes to the heavens, as if wishing to distance herself from all that is going on around her," 2: 396).<sup>17</sup> These stage directions reveal not only external movements, but interior states; they tell us whether the characters' words are sincere, what they wish for, and what is hidden behind their physical appearance and movements. Turgenev plants the interiority of his characters in these stage directions to give the reader an accurate understanding of their emotions. This linking of the external and the internal in order to present characters' psychology would soon become one of Turgenev's most marked novelistic techniques.

Indeed, the comparison of *Mesiats v derevne* to a novel is not an uncommon one, as many critics have called Turgenev's play prosaic and novelistic. Although Turgenev called it a comedy, there is much in its five acts that lies beyond the confines of this dramatic form. It is true that the play ends with two engagements (Vera and the neighbor Bolshintsov, Lizaveta and the doctor Shpigelsky), but these are entirely devoid of emotion: Vera agrees to the marriage to escape Natalya Petrovna, and Lizaveta's marriage is also a rationally calculated move. The central love intrigues do not end happily. Natalya Petrovna loses both of her love interests when Rakitin and Belyaev depart from the estate, and the young couple we expect to see united by the end of the play, Vera and Belyaev, do not marry; their entanglement is largely the product of Natalya Petrovna's imagination, and she herself remains the central figure in the drama. The focus of the play is clearly not on the union of several couples in marriage, but on the psychological complexity of the characters: Natalya Petrovna's exploration of her feelings for two men, Vera's uncertainty of her feelings toward Belyaev, Belyaev's shock and confusion when Natalya Petrovna expresses interest in him. These are the domain of psychological prose, not stage comedy, and Turgenev himself conceded as much in his

<sup>16</sup> Eric Bentley, *The Life of the Drama* (New York: Atheneum, 1964), 78.

<sup>17</sup> All references to Turgenev's writings are from the complete edition of his collected works and letters: I. S. Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v tridsati tomakh* (*Complete Collected Works and Letters in Thirty Volumes*) (Moscow: Nauka, 1978-1986). The volume and page number will be provided parenthetically in the body text. All translations in the body text and notes are mine unless otherwise indicated.



foreword to his dramatic works: “Я поставил было себе в этой комедии довольно сложную психологическую задачу” (“I set myself a rather complicated psychological task in this comedy”) (2: 481).<sup>18</sup>

The delicate psychology of *Mesiats v derevne* did not escape the notice of Turgenev’s contemporaries or of modern critics, who agree that Turgenev is doing something in his comedy that is not quite at home in a play. Turgenev admitted this as well in a note to the first publication of the drama, in *Sovremennik (The Contemporary)* in 1855: “Это собственно не комедия, - а повесть в драматической форме” (“It is not a proper comedy, but a tale in dramatic form”).<sup>19</sup> Agreeing with generations of scholars who compare *Mesiats v derevne* to prose, Richard Freeborn aptly posits that the play “paves the way for the theatrical form of [Turgenev’s] novels.”<sup>20</sup> While its unconventionality impeded its popularity in Turgenev’s day, it has since come to be recognized as a psychological masterpiece, a forerunner to the plays of Chekhov. It is precisely through his use of language and gesture to convey the interiority of his characters, as well as his avoidance of what is typically considered dramatic action, that Turgenev brings the psychological domain of the novel into drama; as we will see in *Rudin*, he performs the same cross-pollination in his novels, infusing them with his dramatic aesthetic.

### **The Road to the Novel**

Before turning to the elements of drama in Turgenev’s novels, however, it must be acknowledged that he was a successful writer of prose long before he turned to the novelistic form. His pre-novelistic prose displays a significant structural divide: the majority of the tales are narrated in first-person, while just a few third-person tales date to the 1850s, at which point Turgenev was beginning to experiment with writing a novel. From the thoughtful observing narrator in *Zapiski okhotnika (A Sportsman’s Sketches, 1847-52)* to the sensitive and emotional storytellers in his longer tales, Turgenev shows himself to be quite adept at placing expressions of interiority within the speaker’s own intensely reflective consciousness. Whether recalling a series of events or expressing themselves in letters or diaries, his narrators present an emotional depth that is one of the most consistent features of Turgenev’s tales. It seems quite likely that the transition into longer first-person tales was a smooth one for him, as he already had a successful model in the narrator of *Zapiski okhotnika*.

However, as Turgenev began to experiment with third-person narrators in the 1850s, the struggle to present the same emotional depth through an outside observer became more evident; what Turgenev excelled at in the first-person, eluded him in the third. He solved this problem by turning to a dramatic mode of narration in the third person; his characters’ interiority is expressed through their gestures, speech, and silences, just as in his plays. Turgenev *shows* us his characters’ thoughts and feelings through physical description rather than through psychological narration or interior monologue. This technique is a perfect embodiment of one of Turgenev’s often-cited remarks in his 1852 review of Alexander Ostrovsky’s drama, *Bednaia nevesta (The Poor*

<sup>18</sup> The wording of the Russian statement implies that Turgenev did not accomplish this task.

<sup>19</sup> *Sovremennik* (1855: 1): 29.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Freeborn, *Turgenev: The Novelist’s Novelist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 109.

*Bride*, 1852): “[...] психолог должен исчезнуть в художнике, как исчезает от глаз скелет под живым и теплым телом, которому он служит прочной, но невидимой опорой” (“[...] the psychologist must be hidden in the artist, just as the skeleton disappears from the eyes under the living and warm body, to which it serves as the strong but unseen support”) (5: 391).

This pattern is used in all of Turgenev’s third-person tales, three of which were published in 1854, followed by another in 1855, just a few months before his first novel *Rudin* was published in 1856.<sup>21</sup> But nowhere is it more evident than in the only extant chapter of the novel Turgenev wrote before *Rudin*, *Dva pokoleniia* (*Two Generations*, written 1850-1857). This text marked the beginning of a new creative era for Turgenev, one that he had been seeking for years. As early as 1851, Turgenev stated in a letter to journalist Evgeny Feoktistov that he was trying to leave *Zapiski okhotnika* behind in order to write something more substantial: “даю Вам честное слово, что “Записки охотника” прекращены навсегда -- я намерен долго ничего не печатать и посвятить себя по возможности большому произведению, которое буду писать с любовью и не торопясь” (“I give you my honest word that *Notes of a Hunter* is finished forever—I intend not to publish anything for a long while and to dedicate myself, as much as I can, to a large work, which I will write with love and not in any hurry”) (*Pis'ma* 2: 96). Indeed, the last of the sketches were published in 1851, after which they were available as a collection in 1852.<sup>22</sup> In an October 1852 letter to critic Konstantin Aksakov, Turgenev expressed his feelings toward his completed work and the work he felt was yet to come:

“Зачем же я издал их?” -- спросите Вы,-- а затем, чтобы отделаться от них, от этой *старой манеры*. Теперь эта обуза сброшена с плеч долой... Но достанет ли у меня сил идти вперед -- как Вы говорите -- не знаю. [...] Я оттого, между прочим, не приступаю до сих пор к исполнению моего романа, все стихии которого давно бродят во мне -- что не чувствую в себе ни той светлости, ни той силы, без которых не скажешь ни одного *прочного* слова.

“Why did I publish them then?” you will ask. I published them so that I could get rid of them, and get rid of that *old style*. Now that burden is thrown from my shoulder, and down with it... But do I have enough strength to go forward, as you say: I don’t know. [...] For that reason, by the way, I still have not entered upon writing my novel, all of the elements of which are fermenting in me—because I do not feel in myself that lucidity, that strength without which I will not say one *solid* word. (*Pis'ma* 2: 150, emphasis Turgenev’s)

While relieved to have the “old style” of *Zapiski okhotnika* behind him, Turgenev reveals his deep doubts about his ability to produce a novel, a task so daunting as to paralyze him completely with writerly anxiety. Several weeks later Turgenev made the same confession to critic Pavel Annenkov and again professed his desire to forever leave the “old style” behind:

<sup>21</sup> For analysis of this dynamic in one of the 1854 tales, “Mumu,” see Victoria Somoff’s 2007 dissertation *From Authority to Author: Russian Prose on the Eve of the Novel, 1820-1850*.

<sup>22</sup> Turgenev only returned to the sketches in the 1870s, adding several more to their number.

Надобно пойти другой дорогой -- надобно найти ее -- и раскланяться навсегда с старой манерой. [...] Но вот вопрос: способен ли я к чему-нибудь большому, спокойному! Дадутся ли мне простые, ясные линии... Этого я не знаю и не узнаю до тех пор, пока не попробую -- но поверьте мне -- Вы от меня услышите что-нибудь новое -- или ничего не услышите.

I need to take a different path—I need to find that path, and take leave of the old style forever. [...] But here is the question: am I capable of something large and tranquil! Will simple, clear lines yield themselves to me... This I do not know and will not know until I try, but believe me: you will hear something new from me, or you will hear nothing at all. (*Pis'ma* 2: 155)

Turgenev's anxiety only seems to grow with his determination to produce a new work, and yet he feels that the rest of his career is resting upon his successful transition from the tale to the novel. Aside from his own personal doubts, Turgenev also surely felt the pressure of the literary-critical environment upon him, determined to produce a Russian novel.

It was in this atmosphere of anxiety and determination that Turgenev produced his first novel, *Dva pokoleniia*. The idea for the novel was in place as early as 1850, and Turgenev worked on it intermittently until as late as 1857. As he completed chapters, he sent copies of his work to his friends and also performed several readings in literary circles. This process was an emotionally fraught one for Turgenev, as he remained hopeful but deeply unsure about his novel while awaiting feedback from his friends. These feelings are evident in an 1853 letter to Annenkov: “Не без волнения буду я ждать Вашего мнения [...] Совершенно дурной вещи я не написал [...] но это еще ничего не значит. Попал ли я в тон романа -- вот что главное. Тут уж частности, отдельные сцены не спасут сочиненья, роман -- не растянутая повесть, как думают иные” (“I will await your opinion not without agitation [...] I have not written something that is completely bad [...] but that doesn't mean anything yet. Did I hit upon the tone of a novel—that is the main thing. Here details and individual scenes will not save the work; a novel is not just a stretched-out tale, as some others think”) (*Pis'ma* 2: 233). Here we see Turgenev working out his own understanding of the genre: the novel is not simply an elongated version of the tale (*povest'*) or a series of related scenes, but it requires something more. Significantly, the novel is defined *negatively* by Turgenev even as he is trying to produce it; he is far more sure about what the novel is *not* than what the novel *is*.

These misgivings and anxieties notwithstanding, Turgenev wrote 500 pages of *Dva pokoleniia*. However, due in large part to the criticism of his friends and fellow writers, he destroyed the majority of it in 1857.<sup>23</sup> The only sections of the work that have been recovered today are an outline of the chapters and the text of one short chapter from the beginning of the novel, entitled “*Sobstvennaia gospodskaia kontora*” (“The Privy Office”), which Turgenev allowed to be published in 1859. While only fragments of the large work Turgenev had in mind, these texts are still very helpful in revealing the scope

<sup>23</sup> Turgenev explains his actions in a letter to Botkin in February 1857 (*Pis'ma* 3: 195). He makes clear that he did not burn the manuscripts, as he said he feared repeating the pattern of Gogol, but rather, tore them into pieces and disposed of them in the “watercloset.”

of Turgenev's novelistic conceptions of the period, and they reveal the influence of drama on many levels.

The plan for the novel was written in 1850, and it begins with a date and a list of characters, called "deistvuiushchie litsa." At first glance, there is no particular significance to this use of a theatrical term (equivalent to "dramatis personae"), and yet the plan for the novel does indicate a dramatic underpinning. The characters listed for *Dva pokoleniia* are almost identical to those outlined for an unwritten play, called *Kompanonka* (*The Companion*), on which Turgenev was working from 1848-1850. The twenty-three characters of *Dva pokoleniia* are drawn very closely from the nineteen listed in *Kompanonka*, and almost in the exact same order. Several figures have been added, and a few family names changed, but most are preserved, from the French tutor Monsieur Dessert to the servant children Pufka and Suslik (2: 524, 5: 351). While we do not have the text of the drama for comparison, it is nonetheless telling that Turgenev drew upon his dramatic works for his first novel.

The outline of the plot of *Dva pokoleniia* suggests a domestically-focused work, not unlike Turgenev's plays, particularly *Mesiats v derevne*. The setting, a country estate, is equally a very familiar one, both for Turgenev's plays and his future novels, as is the central engine of the plot: a love triangle between the new young companion to the mistress and two men—the mistress' young son and her much older cousin (thus, the novel's title).

The existing chapter of this novel shows us yet more about how Turgenev used the dramatic form to handle some of the problems he faced in crafting a novel. The chapter depicts a heated meeting between the mistress of the estate, Gagina, and several of her stewards. The information given about the characters reads like an expansion of the cast list in the outline of the novel—the details of the individuals are largely physical, not psychological. Here is one such example:

В "Собственной конторе" к приходу барыни собралось три человека. Один из них, секретарь Левон, или L on, молодой, белокурый человек, с томными глазами и чахоточным цветом лица, стоял перед своим столом и перелистывал тетрадь; другой, главный приказчик, Кинтилиан, человек лет пятидесяти с лишком -- с седыми волосами и черными навислыми бровями, с лицом угрюмым и хитрым -- неподвижно глядел на пол, скрестив руки на груди. Третий, наконец, бурмистр Павел, красивый мужчина, с черной как смоль бородой, свежими щеками, большим белым лбом и веселыми блестящими глазами, развязно прислонился к двери.

Before the arrival of the mistress there were three people gathered in "the privy office." One of them, the secretary Levon, or Leon, a blond-haired young man with languid eyes and a consumptive face, stood near his table and leafed through a notebook. Another, the main steward Kintillian, a man of some fifty years with gray hair, black beetle brows, and a gloomy and wily face, stared fixedly at the floor, with his arms crossed on his chest. Finally, the third, the bailiff Pavel, a handsome man with a jet black beard, fresh cheeks, a large white forehead, and cheerful shining eyes, leaned familiarly against the door. (5: 8).

The same basic pattern of elements is provided for each of these characters as they are introduced: their age, several physical markers, and their gestures. The new information does not go far beyond what is in the plan for the novel, which indicates their ages and functions on the estate. The narrator does not inform the reader of any of the thoughts or emotions of these three men as they await their intimidating employer, and the only differentiation between them, in terms of characterization, is found in their gestures, which are the sole indication of their attitudes toward the upcoming meeting.

Once the mistress enters, the dialogue is marked by two consistent elements: silences and gestures. In fact, in this chapter of eleven pages, there are no less than thirteen silences in the conversation. They vary from characters failing to respond to one another to a silence falling over the room, usually marked by the phrase: “Наступило молчание” (“Silence fell”) (5: 10). In several instances, the silences and the gestures serve together to fill the void of psychological narration. After Gagina has finished berating one of the stewards, for instance, he can only gesture in response: “Кинтилиан только губы стиснул” (“Kintillian only squeezed his lips”) (5: 12). What is lacking here more than a verbal response is a *narrative* one—throughout the entire conversation, the fear of the stewards is presented only in gestures, but not through narration of their thoughts or emotions.

The same is true of Gagina herself. Although her interior monologue would be an enticing read, based upon her interaction with her stewards, the reader is only aware of her spoken words and her gestures, as in the following instance: “И Глафира Ивановна снова погрузилась в раздумье, изредка только подергивая губами и погромыхивая четками. ‘Кинтилиан Андреев!’ воскликнула она наконец” (“And Glafira Ivanovna was again lost in thought, occasionally twisting her lips and drumming her rosary. ‘Kintillian Andreev!’ she exclaimed at last”) (5: 12). Although the reader is told here that the character is deep in thought, those thoughts remain opaque—Gagina, like her interlocutors, is all surface.

The silence becomes more noticeable when Vasily Vasilevich, the object of Gagina’s wrath, is summoned, and the reader is again left with only silence: “Василий Васильевич помолчал и вдруг приподнялся” (“Vasily Vasilevich fell silent and suddenly rose”) (5: 17). His terror is expressed only verbally and gesturally, as in the final lines of the chapter: “‘Господи! Господи!’ прошептал Василий Васильевич, пощупал рукой по груди, вздохнул раза два и направился отяжелевшими шагами через заднее крыльцо в ‘Собственную контору’” (“‘Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!’ Vasily Vasilevich whispered. He touched his fingers to his chest, sighed twice, and headed with heavy steps across the back porch of ‘the privy office’”) (5: 17).

These markers of interiority are all that readers have to go on thus far, a far cry from Turgenev’s in-depth first-person analysis of self and others, so well-established in *Zapiski okhotnika* and his other tales. It is clear from Turgenev’s first attempt at a novel that the challenge of psychological narration from an outside perspective was a very serious one for him. And yet we have begun to see a possible solution to this problem, as Turgenev makes use of narrative techniques from plays, relying heavily here on gesture, dialogue, and silences as stand-ins for interiority.

### **Rudin: A Hybrid Text**

These techniques are only heightened in Turgenev's first completed and published novel *Rudin*. Before we turn to the text of *Rudin*, however, we must address the issue of its genre. Many scholars have pointed out that Turgenev did not initially refer to it as a novel; he called it instead a *povest'*, a tale. There was no explicit acknowledgement of *Rudin* as a novel until it was published together with Turgenev's following five novels in 1880. What reason do we have then, to treat it as a novel, and to assign it all the significance of a first novel?

Maria di Salvo's recent essay on the polymorphous genre of the *povest'* provides some preliminary answers. Tracing its first manifestations in premodern chronicles and hagiographical texts through its slow evolution in the following centuries, she pinpoints the form's modernization during the sentimentalist period of the late eighteenth century. By the 1830s the genre had come into its own, while the novel was still struggling to establish itself. In light of its great success, she argues, the *povest'* became "a laboratory for prose narrative" as its authors strove to transform it into the ever elusive novel.<sup>24</sup> Given this generic context and Turgenev's anxiety about producing a novel, it seems perfectly natural that he would use the term *povest'* to describe a work he did not yet feel confident enough to boldly christen it a novel.

There are also reasons of timing that link *Rudin* to Turgenev's novelistic aspirations. During the period of his exile at Spasskoe (1852-55), he often wrote in letters to friends that he was continuing to rework his novel *Dva pokoleniia*; what he wrote instead was *Rudin*.<sup>25</sup> The text likewise marks a departure for Turgenev in terms of narrative; while he had certainly written *povesti* of considerable length before this text, and even several in third-person, he had not yet conceived of a third-person work of this depth. *Rudin*, not *Dva pokoleniia*, is the result of his determination to leave behind his "staraiia manera" ("old style") and produce something different.

Finally, it appears that there were psychological reasons behind Turgenev's use of the term *povest'*. The Soviet scholar Anatoly Batiuto has scoured Turgenev's letters and documents in search of patterns in his generic designations of his works: Turgenev actually shifted between the terms *roman* (novel) and *povest'* in referring to *all* of his novels. To give just one example, he consistently referred to *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* as a *povest'* until it was a critical success, at which point he began calling it his *roman*. This designation was short-lived, however; he reverted to calling it a *povest'* again after he received Goncharov's letter accusing him of plagiarism in 1859.<sup>26</sup> Making careful note of the context surrounding Turgenev's letters, Batiuto puts forth a very convincing explanation for this ever-shifting generic nomenclature: Turgenev's novels were *povesti* in his own eyes until they passed through the fire of contemporary criticism; after this point he began to refer to them as *romany*, but this title could be easily revoked in response to challenges from his readers, friends, and critics. It is easy to imagine, then, Turgenev's hesitation to use the term *roman* when working on *Rudin*; in light of the critical frenzy over the necessity of producing of a Russian novel and the stinging

<sup>24</sup> Maria di Salvo, "Povest'" in *The Novel: History, Geography, and Culture*, Volume 1, Ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2006), 288.

<sup>25</sup> For instance, in June 1855 Turgenev wrote to Aksakov that he was revising *Dva pokoleniia*; by July 1855 he wrote to Nekrasov and Botkin that he had finished *Rudin* (*Pis'ma* 3: 28, 49).

<sup>26</sup> A. Batiuto, *Turgenev-romanist (Turgenev the Novelist)* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972), 244-45.

comments he had received in response to *Dva pokoleniia*, the aspiring novelist holds his cards very close to his chest.<sup>27</sup>

In 1855, in the midst of his exile at Spasskoe, Turgenev was cut off from the theatrical world of Paris, Petersburg, and Moscow (a distance he tried to overcome through his correspondence), but the theater was not far from his mind during the writing of the novel.<sup>28</sup> Much of it occurred during or immediately following a visit to Spasskoe by Druzhinin, Botkin, and Grigorovich; one of their sources of entertainment was the composition and performance of several short plays, one of which, *Shkola gostepriimstva* (*The School of Hospitality*), was published in prose form under Grigorovich's name in 1855 and staged in Moscow in 1856.<sup>29</sup> Although both plays were a light-hearted source of amusement, it is significant that Turgenev was contributing to dramatic texts and even taking part in their performance during his conception and composition of the novel.

One of the most readily observable peculiarities of *Rudin* is its very reticent narrative voice. While there is the occasional setting of a scene or the relation of a character's history, much of the text is occupied with dialogue and lengthy monologues. By one scholar's count, some eighty percent of the novel consists of dialogues, monologues, and letters: the direct speech of the characters.<sup>30</sup> This distinctive point sets *Rudin* apart from the authoritative third-person voice of Turgenev's later novels and also from his previous *povesti*, most of which are presented by a capable first-person narrator. The text's extremely limited narrative voice is the first indication of an alignment with drama.<sup>31</sup> But how can we measure the dramatic *within* a prose narrative genre such as the novel?

The clearest definitions of this generic dynamic are found in Percy Lubbock's classic work *The Craft of Fiction*. Beginning with Henry James' concepts of the picture and the scene, loosely identified by the writer in his preface to *The Wings of the Dove*, Lubbock defines these terms more rigorously and applies them to novelistic analysis. In Lubbock's schema, it is "the picture" and "the drama" that occupy opposite ends of the spectrum of narrative. The picture, or the pictorial, is defined as "the reflection of events in the mirror of somebody's reflective consciousness," and, as such, is dependent upon

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid 243-45.

<sup>28</sup> It is worth noting that Turgenev kept up with the world of opera and theater in part through his intimate friendship with opera singer Pauline Viardot. He met her in 1843 and started corresponding with her shortly thereafter. He spent many years with her in Europe, where they often discussed and critiqued each other's work.

<sup>29</sup> Grigorovich describes this visit and their performances in his *Literaturnye vospominaniia* (*Literary Reminiscences*) (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1987), 123-127. Turgenev chided Botkin for allowing the farce to be staged in a February 1856 letter (*Pis'ma* 3: 81).

<sup>30</sup> Baevskii, V. "Rudin I.S. Turgeneva (k voprosu o zhanre)" ("I.S. Turgenev's *Rudin* (Toward the Question of Genre)", *Voprosy literatury* 2 (1958): 136.

<sup>31</sup> Drama's position with regard to narration has been discussed by both novel theorists and drama theorists. Dorrit Cohn has classified drama as a "non-narrative genre," one in which "narrative elements are reduced to zero." Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 255. Drama scholar Manfred Pfister makes the same observation in different terms in his comprehensive study of drama theory; basing his analysis on Plato's distinction between "report" and "representation," in *The Republic*, he identifies drama as unique in its lack of a mediating communication system, which is present in prose narratives through the narrator's relationship with the reader. Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, trans. John Halliday (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 2-4.

the subjectivity of a narrator.<sup>32</sup> The drama, or the dramatic, by contrast, does not require any mediation by the narrator: “[...] the reader has only to see and hear, to be present while the hour passes; and the author places him there accordingly, in front of the visible and audible facts of the case, and leaves it to these to tell the story.”<sup>33</sup> The terms rest upon the narrator’s relationship to and mode of communication with the reader: “[...] in one case [the picture] the reader faces towards the story-teller and listens to him, in the other [the drama] he turns toward the story and watches it.”<sup>34</sup> The dynamic of the novel is determined by the level of participation of the narrator (or, in Lubbock’s terms, the author) in the tale, and whether it is his voice or the voice of the characters that the reader hears. Lubbock gives several examples of novels in which the dramatic method, as he terms it, is used; when a novel consists of not much more than dialogue and stage directions, he states, “the intervention of the story-teller is no longer felt.”<sup>35</sup>

In the absence of an authoritative narrative voice, then, how is the story conveyed to the reader? The burden of exposition, as in a drama, is placed upon the characters, who provide vital background information through dialogue or monologue.<sup>36</sup> A characteristic example of this occurs early in *Rudin*, just after the eponymous character has appeared at Darya Lasunskaya’s estate. In a one-on-one meeting Rudin asks Darya about the other local inhabitants: “‘Кто же еще у вас тут есть?’ спросил [...] Рудин” (5: 234). Darya then provides verbal portraits and biographical information about the characters Rudin has and has not met. This information, motivated by Rudin’s curiosity, gives the reader a full introduction to the characters without requiring the narrative voice to step forward. The function of this conversation becomes even more evident when Lezhnev unexpectedly arrives just as they are finishing their dissection of his character. The conversation between Darya and Rudin thus serves two functions: to introduce Lezhnev to the reader, and to prepare his physical entrance onto the stage of the novel.

These expository introductions also take place through monologue. Lezhnev, who was a close friend of Rudin’s at the university, provides lengthy background information on the new arrival on several occasions—first to explain how they were acquainted, and later, at the length of six pages, to give an account for his distrust of him, due to Rudin’s interference in Lezhnev’s youthful romance. The characters take on a narrative role not only when speaking about others, however; they also narrate themselves. The epilogue of the novel consists almost solely of Rudin’s monologue, in which he explains his various failed enterprises, interrupted only intermittently by Lezhnev’s questions or gestures.

While the voices of the characters clearly dominate the text, the narrative voice that remains should not be overlooked. Indeed, even more significant than the reticence of this narrative voice is the substance of what it tells us, what kind of information it conveys about the characters and events of the novel. Amidst page after page of dialogue, the narrator generally intervenes only to report *observable* phenomena, mainly the characters’ gestures and tones of speech; any revelation of the characters’ thoughts or

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<sup>32</sup> Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction* (New York: Viking Press, 1957), 69. Lubbock’s work was first published in 1921. Although Wayne Booth revisited some of the same issues in his 1961 book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, his work is more a series of close readings than a rigorous reworking of Lubbock’s definitions.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid* 71.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid* 111.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid* 122.

<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Pfister identifies the placement of the exposition within the speech of the characters as one of the key means by which the drama overcomes its lack of a mediating communication system (Pfister, 4).



emotions is extremely rare. Consider one telling example, taken from the salon scene at the beginning of the novel, “‘Так как же, Африкан Семеныч,’ продолжала Дарья Михайловна, обратясь к Пигасову, ‘по-вашему, все барышни неестественны?’ У Пигасова губы скрутились набок, и он нервически задергал локтем” (“‘So then, Afrikan Semenyich,’ continued Daria Mikhailovna, turning to Pigasov, ‘in your opinion all young ladies are affected?’ Pigasov’s lips twisted to one side, and he nervously twitched his elbow.”) (5: 212). The reader is privy only to his physical and terse verbal response. Throughout *Rudin* Turgenev employs this tight economy of interiority, in which gesture stands in place of psychological narration.<sup>37</sup>

This pattern applies to all of the characters in the novel, including its main figures, Rudin and his love interest, Natalya. Although Rudin’s confession of love surely produces a welter of emotions in the young woman, only her physical response is reported: “‘Наталья Алексеевна!’ заговорил он трепетным шепотом, ‘я хотел вас видеть... я не мог дождаться завтрашнего дня. Я должен вам сказать, чего я не подозревал, чего я не сознавал даже сегодня утром: я люблю вас.’ Руки Натальи слабо дрогнули в его руках” (“‘Natalya Alekseevna!’ he began in a timid whisper, ‘I wanted to see you... I could not wait until tomorrow. I must tell you what I did not suspect, what I did not realize even this morning: I love you!’ Natalya’s hands quavered faintly in his hands.”) (5: 269). It is Rudin’s voice that dominates in this scene, as the narrator maintains his distance from the thoughts and emotions of his characters.

Significantly, the narrative voice does not provide access to Natalya’s interiority even when she is alone; here we see her a bit earlier in the novel, after her first encounter with Rudin: “Наталья хотя и разделась и легла в постель, но тоже ни на минуту не уснула и не закрывала даже глаз. Подперши голову рукою, она глядела пристально в темноту; лихорадочно бились ее жилы, и тяжелый вздох часто приподнимал ее грудь” (“Natalya, although she undressed and lay down in her bed, did not fall asleep for an instant and did not even close her eyes. Having propped her head on her arm, she gazed intently into the darkness; her veins were throbbing feverishly, and a deep sigh often lifted her chest”) (5: 231). The information given here about Natalya is purely physical: her gaze, her pulsing veins, and her sighs.

In fact, it is something of a common occurrence in *Rudin*: the characters gaze into space while the narrator seemingly averts his eyes from their interiority. Take, for instance, the narrator’s silence as Rudin looks out the window after his argument with Pigasov: “Рудин ничего не сказал и подошел к раскрытому окну. Душистая мгла лежала мягкой пеленою над садом; дремотной свежестью дышали близкие деревья. Звезды тихо теплились. Летняя ночь и нежилась и нежила. Рудин поглядел в темный сад –и обернулся” (“Rudin did not say anything and walked over to the open window. A fragrant mist lay in a soft mantle over the garden; the nearby trees breathed a drowsy freshness. The stars softly glimmered. The summer night indulged those who those who experienced it and luxuriated in itself. Rudin looked at the dark garden, and turned around.”) (5: 228). The narrator can see no more than Rudin himself does—his perspective is limited to the character’s vision, while Rudin’s thoughts about Pigasov and about Natalya, whom he has just met, must provide part of the mental rush behind his silence. The same phenomenon occurs later in the novel during the argument between

<sup>37</sup>Fittingly, Pfister identifies non-verbal codes such as gestures as the other significant means by which drama makes up for its lack of a mediating communication system (Pfister 4).

Rudin and Volyntsev, both of whom are vying for Natalya's affections. This is Volyntsev's response to Rudin's confession of love for Natalya: "Вольтцев побледнел, но ничего не ответил, отошел к окну и отвернулся [...] Вольтцев продолжал глядеть в окно" ("Volyntsev turned pale, but did not answer; he walked over to the window and turned away [...] Volyntsev continued to look out the window") (5: 272). Once more we have a purely physical response and a narrative silence in regard to interiority. Although the reader might expect in these instances to gaze *into* the character as the character is gazing *out* into the world, nothing of the sort takes place. The window, it would seem, only functions in one direction.

In addition to these moments of elided interiority, there are also a remarkable number of lengthy pauses and silences in conversation, as characters fail to respond to one another; many exchanges are marked by the same phrase we saw in "Sobstvennaia gospodskaia kontora": "наступило молчание" ("silence fell"). Sometimes these two forms of silence are combined, as in the following case, during an awkward conversation between Rudin, Darya, and Lezhnev: "Лежнев ничего не ответил и только взглянул на Рудина. Наступило небольшое молчание" ("Lezhnev made no reply; he only looked at Rudin. A small silence fell") (5: 237). These silences are significant when we consider their quantity—there are no less than five of them in this particular conversation, and there are multitudes of them elsewhere in the novel, during both banal discussions and emotional exchanges. The silences replace language on the part of the characters, but they also stand in for a narrative exploration of what the characters leave unsaid; it is at moments like these when the reader would expect a novelistic narrator to reveal his mastery over his characters' minds. Instead, these silences remain just that: silences.

This phenomenon is another indication of the dramatic method, as the reader can only watch and listen; when the voices of the characters fall silent, the narrative itself pauses. Turgenev's plays contain many such silences and pauses, and in these moments of narrative silence in *Rudin*, the reader feels less like a reader and more like a member of an audience, relying on the visual and the verbal to understand the plot and the characters. Fittingly, this narrative elision in *Rudin* is consistently supplemented by an acute attention to the physical detail of the characters' interactions. Although we cannot see or hear their thoughts, at the very least we can observe their bodies.

It is very rare indeed that characters' thoughts are reported in *Rudin*, but even in those rare cases, they tell us very little. Consider the following example, taken from a conversation between mother and daughter: "'Тебе нечего от меня скрывать,' сказала ей однажды Дарья Михайловна, 'а то бы ты скрытничала: ты-таки себе на уме...'" Наталья поглядела матери в лицо и подумала: 'Для чего же не быть себе на уме?'" ("'You have nothing to hide from me,' Darya Mikhailovna said to her once, 'or else you would be very secretive about it; you keep your thoughts to yourself...' Natalya looked her mother in the face and thought, 'Why shouldn't I keep my thoughts to myself?'" (5: 240). This is an illustrative moment for the novel as a whole; even when we are privy to the thoughts of the characters, it is only to be informed that we are *not* privy to them. Thus both narrator and reader remain in the same position as Natalya's mother: oblivious to the thoughts she keeps to herself.

When characters' thoughts *are* revealed by the narrator, they are not used to provide interiority, but to serve as comic relief. Meant to be heard by the reader, but not by the other characters, they are the novelistic analogue to the dramatic aside. Consider

this example, taken from one of the first salon scenes: “‘Quel dommage,’ подумала про себя старая француженка, взбираясь на ступеньки балкона вслед за Волынцевым и Натальей, ‘quel dommage que ce charmant garçon ait si peu de ressources dans la conversation...’ -что по-русски можно так перевести: ‘ты, мой милый, мил, но плох немножко’” (“‘It’s too bad,’ the old Frenchwoman thought to herself, climbing up the steps of the balcony behind Volyntsev and Natalya, ‘It’s too bad that this charming boy has so few resources in conversation...,’ which can be translated into Russian: ‘You, my dear, are dear, but not so good’”) (5: 218). Part of the humor of Mlle Boncourt’s thought is that it is not meant to be revealed, and yet the reader hears it loud and clear, and even translated from French into Russian. Another example is soon to follow, this one from Darya Mikhailovna: “‘C’est un homme comme il faut,’ подумала она, с доброжелательным вниманием взглянув в лицо Рудину. ‘Надо его приласкать.’ Эти последние слова она мысленно произнесла по-русски” (“ ‘C’est un homme comme il faut,’ she thought, and she looked into Rudin’s face with benevolent attention. ‘I must be nice to him.’ These last words she pronounced mentally in Russian”) (5: 228). If the reader is not meant to hear Darya’s thoughts, why does the narrator take such care to explain which parts of them were in French and which in English? Although French was certainly the language of the salon in the nineteenth century, it was also the language of the salon *comedy*, imported from France, and these asides, meant to establish a connection between the characters and audience, suggest their provenance in Turgenev’s prose through their language.

As these narrative tendencies indicate, *Rudin* is constructed almost entirely as a dramatic text, with the speech of the characters taking center stage, and the narrator’s voice relegated to stage directions, detailing gestures, sighs, and tones of speech. This pattern is further supported by the fact that some of the gestures reported are actually placed in parentheses, just as Turgenev wrote the stage directions in his own plays. Here is one such example, from one of Rudin’s early meetings with Natalya: “‘Сядемте здесь, на скамью,’ продолжал он. ‘Вот так. Мне почему-то кажется, что когда вы попривыкнете ко мне (и он с улыбкой посмотрел ей в лицо), мы будем приятели с вами. Как вы полагаете?’” (“‘Let’s sit down here on the bench,’ he continued. ‘There we are. For some reason it seems to me that when you get more used to me (and he looked her in the face with a smile) ‘we will be friends with each other. What do you think?’”) (5: 241). Their exchange is made more flirtatious by Rudin’s smile and direct gaze into Natalya’s face, but the narrator does not step in to clarify Rudin’s thoughts or intentions; he merely creates a hint of what is to come through his facial expressions.

The parenthetical reporting of gesture is also used to describe the response of one character to the speech of another. The following example is taken, again, from Rudin’s confrontation with Volyntsev: “‘Извольте... мы одни... Я должен вам сказать - впрочем, вы, вероятно, уже догадываетесь (Волынец нетерпеливо пожал плечами), ‘я должен вам сказать, что я люблю Наталью Алексеевну и имею право предполагать, что и она меня любит’” (“‘If you please... we are alone... I must tell you—though you probably suspect it already’ (Volyntsev impatiently shrugged his shoulders) ‘I must tell you that I love Natalya Alekseevna, and I have the right to suppose that she loves me too.’”) (5: 272). This is another emotionally tense moment at which we might expect the novelistic narrator to clarify the mental state of the characters, but

instead, the only interruption of Rudin's monologue is this impatient shrugging of the shoulders. Readers are left to intuit the meaning of this gesture on their own.

These readily observable manifestations of the dramatic mode also correspond to the deeper, thematic and structural ones. A number of scholars have considered the conclusions of Turgenev's novels, often weddings, to be comedic in the pattern of Shakespeare. David Lowe offers the most rigorous version of this analysis, relying upon Northrop Frye's designations of comedy and tragedy in his *Anatomy of Criticism*, which permit an application of the terms to both dramatic and prose works.<sup>38</sup> The happy unions in *Rudin* (Alexandra and Lezhnev, and Natalya and the long-suffering Volyntsev) are no exception. The death of Rudin on the barricades in Paris, appended in a second epilogue in 1860, also adds the tragic for balance, as the hero meets his end in fighting for a just cause.

In terms of the basic contours of the plot, there are numerous similarities to *Mesiats v derevne*: the setting of the country estate, a young woman caught between a sensible older man and a foolish younger one, and the two marriages that bring both works to a conclusion. However, there is also a great deal of correspondence between characters in the play and the novel: the obtuse neighbor, the self-sacrificing older woman, and the young upstart whose presence has an unsettling effect on relationships among other characters. This pattern, that of an outsider arriving to disrupt the status quo of an established community, is a deeply dramatic one. Providing examples from *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Oedipus Tyrannos*, drama scholar and director David Ball identifies stasis and intrusion as one of the most essential plot-structuring patterns of drama.<sup>39</sup> Ball argues that every play presents a pre-existing condition of stasis, a balance among elements that does not allow for any motion or action; for the play to begin, there must be a forceful intrusion, which brings these elements into conflict and creates the action of the drama. Turgenev does this just as masterfully in *Rudin* as he does in *Mesiats v derevne*; without the momentous arrival of the eponymous character, nothing would happen.

Additionally, much information is conveyed from character to character in *Rudin* through eavesdropping, also a hallmark of Turgenev's plays. In *Rudin* it is safe to assume that whenever a troubled tête-à-tête is taking place, someone hidden is listening. Rudin and Natalya are observed first by Volyntsev, and later by Pandalevsky, and the information they glean is then dispersed to others, keeping the engine of the plot moving. This technique is also a dramatic one, as so much of the relationship between actor and spectator has to do with a discrepancy of information; the audience sees what the actor does not.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For the details of Lowe's argument, see his book *Turgenev's Fathers and Sons* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1983), 15-27. For the full text of Northrop Frye's argument, see his *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

<sup>39</sup> David Ball, *Backwards and Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 19-24. I am grateful to Peter Glazer for calling this work to my attention.

<sup>40</sup> Pfister considers eavesdropping scenes in drama as instances of a play-within-a-play, as they stage a spectator to the events unfolding who is actually on the stage himself (Pfister 230). Notably, eavesdropping is also a hallmark of the *svetskaia povest'* ("society tale"), a genre popular in the 1830s that is considered one of the forerunners to the Russian novel. The *svetskaia povest'* is also considered a highly dramatic form of prose, making use of numerous dramatic devices. Fittingly, Boris Eikhenbaum identifies *Rudin* as a continuation of these trends in his notes to an early edition of Turgenev's collected works: I.S. Turgenev,

And finally, as several scholars have noted, *Rudin* comes very close to observing the classical unities of drama: unity of place, unity of action, and unity of time. Almost all of the events, aside from the isolated incidents in the epilogues, take place on Lasunskaya's estate, and there is no side plot in *Rudin*—the novel is solely concerned with the appearance and effect of the eponymous character. Soviet scholar Mikhail Kleman was the first to point out that while *Rudin* does not take place in a twenty-four-hour period, the events are arranged into only four discrete days; taking this observation as a point of departure, Baevsky posits that the novel is already perfectly divided into four acts, with an epilogue. Numerous critics in the intervening years have confirmed this scenic quality in the novel.<sup>41</sup>

Beyond the limited narrative voice and the dramatic structural patterns and devices, drama also appears in *Rudin* on an explicit thematic level, complicating the relationship between generic modes in the text. The novel contains many references to both Russian and Western dramatic works. For instance, Alexandra accuses Lezhnev of painting Rudin as Molière's Tartuffe. Lezhnev, in response, is quick to make a distinction between the two: "В том-то и дело, что он даже не Тартюф. Тартюф, тот по крайней мере знал, чего добивался; а этот, при всем своем уме..." ("But that is exactly the point—he is not even a Tartuffe. Tartuffe at least knew what he was striving for, but this one, for all of his brains...") (5: 254). It is significant that Rudin, who is far worse, and far *worse off*, than Tartuffe, is placed within a dramatic spectrum of characterization, not by the narrator, but by the other characters; drama is their immediate frame of reference. Rudin himself is no less aware of drama; in an echo of Turgenev's *povest'* "Faust" of 1855, Rudin reads Goethe's play to Natalya, and then explains his plan to write an essay on the tragic in life and art (5: 249-50). It seems that *Faust* is no less significant to Rudin than it was to Turgenev, who wrote two critical reviews of it in the 1840s (1: 212-56). Rudin also takes part in comparing other characters to dramatic ones; he in fact one-ups Lezhnev's insult by calling Pigasov a Mephistopheles (5: 238). In addition to these references to Western dramatic works, there are several lines quoted (or misquoted) from Griboedov's *Gore ot uma* (*Woe from Wit*, 1825), linking Daria Mikhailovna's drawing room to Famusov's (5: 214).<sup>42</sup>

There is yet one more major dramatic reference in *Rudin*, however, one that, to my knowledge, has not been treated by previous scholarship. The narrator, in a rare moment of self-identification, explains the significance of the images framed in station houses before providing the details of Rudin's lonely journey:

Один мой знакомый [...] сделал замечание, что если в станционной комнате на стенах висят картинки, изображающие сцены из "Кавказского пленника" или русских генералов, то лошадей скоро достать можно; но если на

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*Sochineniia*, Vol. V (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1930), 287. For more detail on the dramatic elements of the *svetskaia povest'*, see Somoff and the following: Helena Gosciolo, "Stage and Page: Drama's Incursion Into Russian Fiction of the 1830s," *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Bydgoszczy* 18.7 (1985): 91-113; Elizabeth C. Shepard, "The Society Tale and the Innovative Argument in Russian Prose Fiction of the 1830s," *Russian Literature* X (1981): 111-62.

<sup>41</sup> M.K. Kleman, *I.S. Turgenev. Rudin. Dvorianskoe gnezdo* (Moscow: Akademiia, 1936), 438; Baevskii 137-38.

<sup>42</sup> Rudin bears some resemblance to Chatskii, the visitor with new ideas, who creates endless conflicts in the family. Rudin too plays the role of the intruder and sparks heated moral and political debates within the social circle of the village. I am grateful to Anna Muza for pointing out this similarity.

картинках представлена жизнь известного игрока Жоржа де Жермани, то путешественнику нечего надеяться на быстрый отъезд: успеет он налюбоваться на закрученный кок, белый раскидной жилет и чрезвычайно узкие и короткие панталоны игрока в молодости, на его исступленную физиономию, когда он, будучи уже старцем, убивает, высоко взмахнув стулом, в хижине с крутою крышей, своего сына. В комнате, куда вошел Рудин, висели именно эти картины из "Тридцати лет, или Жизни игрока". На крик его явился смотритель [...] не выждав даже вопроса Рудина, вялым голосом объявил, что лошадей нет.

One acquaintance of mine [...] made the observation that if on the station room walls hang pictures showing scenes from "The Prisoner of the Caucasus" or Russian generals, then you will get your horses quickly. But if the pictures depict the life of the famous gambler Georges de Germany, then the traveler had better not hope for a quick departure. He will have time to observe the twisted quiff, the white folding jacket and the extraordinarily tight and short pants of the gambler in his youth; his frenzied physiognomy when, already an old man, he kills his son, swinging a chair high in the hut with the steep roof. In the room into which Rudin entered there hung exactly these pictures from "Thirty Years, or the Life of a Gambler." The stationmaster appeared in answer to his call [...] not even waiting to hear Rudin's question, he informed him with a listless voice that there were no horses. (5: 307-08)

This passage makes a clear reference to Pushkin's tale "Stantsionnyi smotritel'" ("The Stationmaster," 1831), in which the pictures of the parable of the Prodigal Son lining the walls serve as a subtext for the narrative and provide a key to its interpretation. By the same token, Victor Ducange's melodrama *Thirty Years, or the Life of a Gambler* (1827) provides a subtext for *Rudin*. This melodrama, one of Ducange's most successful, depicts various stages in the life of the villain Georges de Germany: his arranged marriage to a wealthy woman, his increasing violence toward her and his rapid loss of her riches through gambling, his unknowing murder of his son, and yet another murder in conjunction with his own suicide. The narrator in *Rudin* pays close attention to the details of the pictures hanging on the wall, first depicting Georges as a dashing youth, and moving on to his eventual unraveling in the final murder scene. This trajectory is an emblematic one for *Rudin*, and it illustrates an escalation in the function of dramatic references in the text; they have advanced from illustrations of character (*Tartuffe*, *Mephistopheles*) to structuring patterns for the character's life narrative.

Although Rudin himself does not represent such evil incarnate, the tale of his life in the intervening years, which he shares with Lezhnev immediately following the introduction of the pictures, bears some striking similarities to the famous villain. Ducange's melodrama consists of three acts, which are three days in the life of Georges de Germany; Rudin's narrative also consists of three episodes—his three failed endeavors: scientific innovations, creating a navigable route out of a provincial river, and finally, teaching Russian literature. Rudin remains a failure, a man who was once a promising youth, but now is worn and bedraggled.

Turgenev held a far less than complimentary view of melodrama as a genre, so why does he choose to invoke it, and to align his hero with one of its anti-heroes? By doing so, Turgenev highlights Rudin's tendency toward theatricality as one of his greatest weaknesses. As defined by Elizabeth Burns, theatricality rests upon the spectator's ability to recognize aspects of stage performance in the behavior of those they encounter in social settings. Burns states:

Behavior can be described as 'theatrical' only by those who know what drama is [...] Behavior is not therefore theatrical because it is of a certain kind but because the observer recognizes certain patterns and sequences which are analogous to those with which he is familiar in the theater [...] it attaches to any kind of behavior perceived and interpreted by others and described (mentally or explicitly) in theatrical terms.<sup>43</sup>

With their frequent references to drama, Turgenev's characters are highly qualified to identify theatricality in others, and they repeatedly recognize it in Rudin. Here is Pigasov's opinion of Rudin: “[Он] любит пожить на чужой счет, разыгрывает роль, и так далее...” (“He likes to live at other's expense, plays a role, and so forth...”) (5: 252). Lezhnev makes a similar complaint, bemoaning the fact that the naïve Natalya is likely to fall for Rudin's amorous performance: “И надобно же, чтобы эдакая честная, страстная и горячая натура наткнулась на такого актера, на такую кокетку!” (“And wouldn't you know it, that such an honest, passionate and ardent nature has stumbled upon such an actor, such a coquette!”) (5: 253).<sup>44</sup> Lezhnev recognizes that Rudin does not plan to marry Natalya, but is merely amusing himself by playing a romantic role; his actions do not line up with his intentions. In both of these examples we see characters using the metaphor of the theater to accuse one another, essentially, of inauthenticity.

More strikingly, the accusation of theatricality comes even from the narrator himself, in one of the rare moments of his commentary on the characters. Speaking of Rudin, he says: “Рудин встал. Весь разговор между ним и Дарьей Михайловной носил особый отпечаток. Актеры так репетируют свои роли, дипломаты так на конференциях меняются заранее условленными фразами...” (“Rudin stood up. The whole conversation between him and Daria Mikhailovna bore a particular mark. Thus do actors rehearse their roles, thus do diplomats exchange phrases agreed upon in advance...”) (5: 291). This statement stands out as a particularly damning one, aligning the narrator with the characters in the negative assessment of Rudin's untrustworthy theatrical behavior.

Turgenev's consistent concern with authenticity is illuminated by his critical reviews, written as he was composing his own plays in the 1840s and early 1850s. For instance, in his 1847 review of Nestor Kukol'nik's play *General-Poruchik Patkul'*, Turgenev attributes a “lozhnaia natural'nost” (“false naturalness”) to the play, which manifests itself in the declamations of the characters: “И в ней, как и во многих других произведениях русской сцены, характеристика, умение вести диалог, представить зрителям игру страстей и выгод -- пожертвованы декламации, иногда довольно удачной, иногда напыщенной, всегда неестественной и однообразной” (“And in it, as in many other works of the Russian stage, characterization, the ability to carry out

<sup>43</sup> Burns 12-13.

<sup>44</sup> The figure of the coquette is also a stage *emploi*, imported from France.

dialogue, and the ability to present the viewer with a game of passions and advantages are all sacrificed to declamation, which is sometimes successful, and sometimes bombastic, but always unnatural and monotonous” (1: 296). Turgenev is unwilling to overlook the unnaturalness (“neestestvennost’”) of these declamations, the fact that they are all of a piece, and thus do not accurately reflect the individual character. He calls instead for a language and mode of expression that is authentic.

Turgenev’s focus on authenticity is not limited to language; he also concerns himself with gesture, as in his 1852 review of Ostrovsky’s play *Bednaia nevesta*. Striking a familiar chord, Turgenev states that the main weakness of the play is its “lozhnaia manera” (“false manner”), seen particularly in the speech of the characters, which is not authentic. There is, however, an alternative to this inauthentic language, a means of truthfully presenting a character: gesture. In analyzing a scene which he finds more successful, Turgenev praises the small yet expressive movements of the characters: “[...] нам дороже всего те простые, внезапные движения, в которых звучно высказывается человеческая душа” (“[...] What is dearer to us than anything are those simple, sudden movements, in which the human soul sonorously speaks”) (5: 392). These reviews offer some context for Turgenev’s intent focus on dialogue in *Rudin*, and for his close attention to gesture: these are the means through which inauthenticity can be avoided.

The central significance of authenticity in the text is powerfully illuminated by a scene that takes place in its opening pages. Asked if he finds all ladies to be affected, Pigasov responds not only verbally, but also with a physical performance of the gestures that he finds so inauthentic:

“Все барышни вообще неестественны в высшей степени - неестественны в выражении чувств своих. Испугается ли, например, барышня, обрадуется ли чему или опечалится, она непременно сперва придаст телу своему какой-нибудь эдакий изящный изгиб (и Пигасов пребезобразно выгнул свой стан и оттопырил руки) и потом уж крикнет: ах!”

“All young ladies, in general, are affected in the highest degree—affected in the expression of their feelings. If a young lady is frightened, for instance, or if she rejoices in anything, or if she is sad, she will certainly first give her body some such elegant bend (and Pigasov most outrageously bent his figure and stuck out his hands) and then she will scream: ah!” (5: 212)

The target of Pigasov’s complaint is not necessarily the gesture itself, which he performatively demonstrates, here again in parentheses akin to stage directions, but the fact that the same gesture is used to express a wide variety of emotions; it is thus impossible to identify the woman’s emotion based on her gestures. The use of the term “neestestvenny” indicates the same issue of unnaturalness or inauthenticity; Pigasov, like Turgenev, demands that a person’s outer characteristics genuinely reflect his or her inner state.<sup>45</sup> This scene reveals an important element of the world of Turgenev’s text: that the

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<sup>45</sup> In discussing this phenomenon in the Victorian novel, J. Jeffrey Franklin terms this insistence upon the genuine expression of emotion “subjective authenticity;” he also points out that characters associated with theatricality are often treated negatively by Victorian narrators. J. Jeffrey Franklin, *Serious Play: The*



characters are continually engaged in the act of reading each others' interior states through their gestures. Given the very minor presence of the narrative voice and the almost complete lack of interiority of the characters, this is precisely how the reader must judge the characters as well.

A complex relationship emerges between drama, melodrama, and theatricality in *Rudin*: the text condemns the theatrical and melodramatic while nonetheless making great use of a dramatic mode of narration, in which information is revealed to the reader through the direct speech of the characters and through their gestures. Firmly believing in the power of language and gesture to express the interiority of his characters, Turgenev cannot abide the misuse of these elements to create a false impression of emotions and intentions. To borrow a phrase from Peter Brooks, it is not a "melodramatic imagination" that fuels Turgenev's novel, but a *dramatic* imagination, one that relies on speech and gesture to create authentic characters. Given this centrality of the dramatic form in *Rudin*, I offer a new definition of its genre in the same spirit as Turgenev's classification of *Mesiats v derevne*: if his play was a "povest' v dramaticheskoi forme" ("tale in dramatic form"), then his novel is, conversely, a "drama v forme romana" ("drama in novelistic form").

### **Turgenev's Later Novels: The Dramatic Novelistic Aesthetic**

When *Rudin* was published in 1856 Turgenev was still at the outset of his novelistic career. Even as he developed more advanced novelistic narrative techniques, however, Turgenev retained the dramatic form in his texts, most recognizably in his continued reliance on dialogue, gestures, and silences to convey interiority, and in his plot patterning. And, of course, the dramatic and the theatrical, even the melodramatic, remain perennial subject matter in his established novels; Turgenev never entirely relinquishes the dramatic mode narration he used in his first novel.

After *Rudin*, Turgenev was soon at work on his next novel, *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* (*A Nest of the Gentry*), published in 1859 in *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*). It is a text that reveals a number of advances in novelistic narrative; most significantly, the narrative voice is a far greater presence in the text, authoritatively providing the details of events and personalities and making frequent direct addresses to the reader. No longer does the narrator rely on the conversation of characters for exposition.

*Dvorianskoe gnezdo* also boasts a far more complex narrative and temporal structure; it does not confine itself to the unity of action and unity of time found in *Rudin*. In Turgenev's first novel there is little departure from the present moment of storytelling, no rearrangement of its temporal elements, and no action (aside from that in the epilogue) that does not take place within the short span of several days. The *siuzhet* of *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* is of a much higher complexity and sophistication; it covers a longer period of time and includes a number of lengthy narrative digressions which provide the history of particular characters.<sup>46</sup> While these digressions are not as abrupt as those we see in

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*Cultural Form of the Nineteenth-Century Realist Novel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 5,8. I am grateful to Anna Muza for calling my attention to this work.

<sup>46</sup> The digressions concern not just the main characters, but also more tangential ones, such the German music teacher, the nanny, and the main characters' grandparents and even great-grandparents. Some of the digressions contain digressions within themselves, and go on for over twenty-five pages.

Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, they do complicate the trajectory of the narrative. Notably, in discussing the temporal displacement that marks Sterne's novel, Viktor Shklovsky cites Turgenev's *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* as a classic example of this element of the poetics of the novel.<sup>47</sup>

Another distinctive novelistic feature of *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* that is lacking in *Rudin* is the narration of interiority. In *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* Turgenev makes masterful use of all three of the modes of narrating interiority in third-person texts identified by Dorrit Cohn: psycho-narration, quoted monologue, and narrated monologue.<sup>48</sup> Through the use of these narrative techniques, Turgenev finally achieves in the third person the emotional depth of his first-person *povesti*. Instead of the gestures or sighs that are the only evidence of private thoughts in *Rudin*, here we have a narrator with much greater access to his characters, one who moves effortlessly from the exterior to the interior. To return to Lubbock's terms, what Turgenev creates in *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* is not a drama, but a picture.

And yet drama is not absent in *Dvorianskoe gnezdo*. In spite of these novelistic advances, Turgenev's second novel retains many of the dramatic elements we observed in the first, and it is through their commingling that we begin to see the development of Turgenev's dramatic-novelistic aesthetic, which he maintains throughout his career. What Turgenev learned to do was to use dramatic devices, narrative techniques, and subject matter without allowing it to dominate the narrative form of his texts. His later novels achieve a balance of elements, showing that Turgenev does not drop the dramatic form from his texts, but is able to bring it into a more even balance with his novelistic narrative.

In terms of plot construction, Turgenev continues to use the device of eavesdropping as a means of dispersing information among characters. In almost every key emotional scene, the characters in conversation are being unknowingly watched by some third party: Lavretsky's urgings to Liza to marry for love are heard by Liza's younger sister and her aunt's ward; the ward also spies upon Liza and Lavretsky's midnight meeting in the garden; then Liza's aunt herself spies upon Liza's confession of love to Lavretsky. These instances of eavesdropping not only allow for the dispersal of information between characters, but they also stage the characters as performers and spectators within the novelistic text.

Turgenev also uses the Kalitins' estate as a veritable stage in the early chapters of the novel, insofar as it is a static space into which all of the characters enter one by one. In a marked repetition of action, each of the first six chapters ushers in a new figure, first through the conversation of the characters already present or by announcement, and then through a physical entrance. The final character to be introduced is Lavretsky, who continues the dramatic pattern of stasis and intrusion we saw in *Rudin*; he is the outsider whose presence disrupts the status quo.

The interactions between characters in *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* are marked by some of the key features we have come to expect from Turgenev: silences and gestures. Take, for instance, Liza's response to Panshin's declaration of love, which is very reminiscent

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<sup>47</sup> Shklovsky 149. Shklovsky also notes the vast difference between Turgenev's first two novels in terms of narrative and temporal structure; he points out the overwhelming simplicity of *Rudin*: "Turgenev's *Rudin* consists of one story, one episode, and Rudin's confession" (Shklovsky 57).

<sup>48</sup> Cohn 1-17.

of the confession scene between Natalya and Rudin: “Лиза ничего не отвечала ему и, не улыбаясь, слегка приподняв брови и краснея, глядела на пол, но не отнимала своей руки” (“Liza did not answer him, and, not smiling, having slightly raised her eyebrows and turned red, she looked at the floor, but did not take away her hand”) (6: 28). As in *Rudin*, these gestures are sometimes placed in parentheses, where they function as the novelistic equivalent of stage directions.

Nowhere is drama more present in *Dvorianskoe gnezdo*, however, than as a topic of conversation between characters and in their behavior itself. There is an inverse relationship taking shape in this novel: even as dramatic tropes and narrative techniques are supplanted by more novelistic ones, drama becomes ever more important thematically and as an explicit point of reference for the characters. To give just a few examples of this dramatically well-educated cast, Panshin searches for the overture to Weber’s opera *Oberon*, Lavretsky displays a youthful craze for the actor Mochalov, and he meets his wife in a box at the theater, a scene ominously familiar to readers of Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* and Tolstoy’s later novels. Jane Costlow has argued that the space of the novel is divided between two stages: the upper rooms of Marfa Timofeevna are the higher realm of tragedy, while Marya Dmitrievna’s drawing room below is the space of melodrama.<sup>49</sup> While Costlow makes the distinction between the two genres based on space, I would argue that the line between them is drawn even deeper, on the level of the characters themselves, in whatever space in which they find themselves. Certain characters are unmistakably negatively identified with performance; just as *Rudin*’s narrator told us that the eponymous character conducted himself like an actor, so we are told here that Panshin, aside from his talent at singing, is also a good actor: “Все ему далось: он мило пел, бойко рисовал, писал стихи, весьма недурно играл на сцене” (“He was good at everything: he sang sweetly, drew sharply, wrote verses, and acted a very fair part on the stage”) (6: 15). This designation, while seemingly simply a part of Panshin’s biography, is an early indication that as a performer, he is not to be trusted.

As the novel’s characters have a great deal of respect for stage productions, it is not the issue of performance itself that is troubling to them, but the perception of performance *outside out the space of the theater*, in the realm of everyday life: theatricality, to use Burns’ term again. In this regard, no character can top Varvara Pavlovna, Lavretsky’s wife, who is almost constantly identified by others as a performer, and who frequently stages scenes to manipulate the emotions of others. One notable instance occurs as she returns to Lavretsky to beg his forgiveness for her infidelity; when her pleading gets her nowhere, she artfully brings out their daughter, whom he has never seen. The tactic does not go as planned: “Но тут стало невмочь Лаврецкому. ‘В какой это мелодраме есть совершенно такая сцена?’ - пробормотал он и вышел вон” (“But here Lavretsky could stand it no longer. ‘In what melodrama is it that there is exactly this scene?’ he muttered and went away”) (6: 116). Varvara’s staging of this scene fails precisely because Lavretsky recognizes it as such. The problem lies not simply in the fact that Varvara has recreated the stage performance in her own private life, but also in the genre from which she borrows. Although in Peter Brooks’ study of post-revolutionary France melodrama carries all the significance of the lost realm of tragedy, we must recall that for Turgenev it means precisely the opposite; even from his earliest reviews he aligns

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<sup>49</sup> Jane Costlow, *Worlds Within Worlds: The Novels of Ivan Turgenev* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 31.

melodrama with gestures and language that are not backed up by authentic emotion, and this is one of his foremost aesthetic concerns. Lavretsky thus performs on a smaller scale the same critical reading as Turgenev, recognizing that there is no authentic expression in Varvara's actions and words.

As Varvara makes herself a regular figure on the Kalitins' estate, her penchant for melodrama becomes ever more clear. She quickly aligns herself with other melodramatic characters, beginning a coquettish flirtation with Panshin, who sings "with a melodramatic flourish" for her. In conversation she reveals her favorite writers, citing among them the librettist Scribe, whose melodramatic works were anathema to Turgenev, and Dumas and Feval, who did not fare much better in his opinion. The epilogue tells us that Varvara's predilection for melodrama and desire to emulate it have only grown stronger: "У каждого человека есть свой идеал: Варвара Павловна нашла свой - в драматических произведениях г-на Дюма-сына. Она прилежно посещает театр, где выводятся на сцену чахоточные и чувствительные камелии; быть г-жою Дош кажется ей верхом человеческого благополучия" ("Every person has their ideal: Varvara Pavlovna found hers in the dramatic works of M. Duma *fils*. She visits the theater diligently, where the consumptive and sensitive "camellias" are brought onto the stage. To be Madame Doche seems to her the height of human happiness") (6: 153). Varvara's highest goal, then, is to recreate the plot and aesthetic of Dumas' *La Dame aux camellias* in her own life; she wants to be Eugenie Doche (the first actress to play the lead role in the opera) on the stage of her own life. This is an aspiration she has some success in fulfilling, as Costlow notes the similarity of Varvara's life story to that of Marguerite Gautier, the heroine of Dumas' 1848 novel, renamed Violetta Valery in Verdi's 1853 opera *La Traviata*.<sup>50</sup>

It may rightfully be said, however, that the height of Varvara's performance occurs during a scene arranged and directed by Marya Dmitrievna, a dramatic reunion intended to bring about the reconciliation of husband and wife. After her tearful entreaty to Lavretsky (the narrator tells us, after all, that she loves to cry), Marya Dmitrievna leads Varvara out from behind a screen, where she has been waiting and listening during their entire exchange. Lavretsky, perceiving the falsity of the scene, is outraged and denounces her efforts: "Вы, вероятно, любите чувствительные сцены (Лаврецкий не ошибался: Марья Дмитриевна еще с института сохранила страсть к некоторой театральности); они вас забавляют; но другим от них плохо приходится. Впрочем, я с вами говорить не буду: в *этой* сцене не вы главное действующее лицо" ("You probably love sentimental scenes (Lavretsky was not mistaken: Marya Dmitrievna, from her youth, had preserved a passion for a certain measure of theatricality); they amuse you, but they hurt other people. But I am not going to talk to you: in *this* scene you are not the main character") (6: 144, emphasis Turgenev's). More significant than Lavretsky's decoding of the performance staged for him is the narrator's revelation of Marya Dmitrievna's penchant for theatricality ("teatral'nost'"), recreating the tableaux of the stage in her private life. Marya Dmitrievna's intentions are clarified by her reflection upon the failure of her efforts: "Марья Дмитриевна [...] не была довольна ни Лаврецким, ни Варварой Павловной, ни всей подготовленной ею сценой. Чувствительности

<sup>50</sup> Costlow, 40. Turgenev and Pauline Viardot shared a marked disdain for Verdi's works, which they expressed frequently in their correspondence. To give just one example, in an 1857 letter to Viardot, Turgenev called Verdi's music "de la plus ignoble espèce" (*Pis'ma* 3: 265).

вышло мало; Варвара Павловна, по ее мнению, должна была броситься к ногам мужа” (“Marya Dmitrievna [...] was not satisfied with Lavretsky, nor with Varvara Pavlovna, nor with the entire scene she had prepared. There was too little sentimentality; Varvara Pavlovna, in her opinion, should have thrown herself at her husband’s feet”) (6: 146). Her scene failed in that it was not melodramatic enough, for what gesture could be more emotional, and more canonically melodramatic, than one character throwing herself at the feet of another?

*Dvorianskoe gnezdo* provides a compelling portrait of Turgenev’s developing dramatic novelistic aesthetic. While it shows many advances in narrative and temporal structure, it clearly does not abandon the dramatic devices he explored so fully in *Rudin*. And although it may seem that drama is less structurally vital to Turgenev’s second novel than to his first, it becomes markedly more present thematically and as an index for characterization. Despite the fact that he is no longer a playwright, Turgenev transforms his novelistic characters into actors and directors, and has them assess one another based on the authenticity of their performances in everyday life.

Where is the dramatic novelistic aesthetic in Turgenev’s most famous and successful novel *Ottsy i deti* (*Fathers and Sons*, 1862)? From the very beginning the text is in the command of a confident and authoritative novelistic narrative voice. The tale begins in medias res, as Nikolai Kirsanov is awaiting the arrival of his son, but the narrator soon pauses the action to provide a biographical background: “Барин вздохнул и присел на скамеечку. Познакомим с ним читателя, пока он сидит, подогнувши под себя ножки и задумчиво поглядывая кругом” (“The gentleman sighed and sat down on the bench. Let us acquaint the reader with him while he sits; he has tucked his legs under and is pensively looking around”) (7: 7). Not only does the narrator fill in the silence of this scene (in contrast to the narrator of *Rudin*), but he actually *creates* this silence, in which the reader can approach the character and almost touch him in his frozen state.

In *Ottsy i deti* the narrator has an expanded grasp of characters’ interiority; psycho-narration and interior monologues abound. To give one prime example, before the carriage has made it back to the Kirsanov estate with its new arrivals in tow, the reader is already privy to Arkady’s thoughts and feelings upon returning home: disappointment in the decay of the countryside and explorations of how to introduce reforms (7: 16). It is not long, however, before the narrator goes far beyond the mere reporting of an emotion or thought, displaying his absolute knowledge of his characters and ability to express their inner states. This is the narrator’s account of Nikolai Petrovich’s state of mind during a rather difficult attempt to explain to Arkady his relationship with Fenechka:

Сердце его забилося...Представилась ли ему в это мгновение неизбежная странность будущих отношений между им и сыном, сознавал ли он, что едва ли не большее бы уважение оказал ему Аркадий, если б он вовсе не касался этого дела, упрекал ли он самого себя в слабости - сказать трудно; все эти чувства были в нем, но в виде ощущений -и то неясных; а с лица не сходила краска, и сердце билось.

His heart began to pound...Did he see before him in that moment the unavoidable awkwardness in his future relationship with his son? Did he realize that Arkady

might have shown him more respect if he had not touched upon the matter at all? Did he reproach himself for his weakness? It is hard to say. All of these feelings were present in him, but in the form of sensations, and as such, they were unclear. And the redness did not leave his face, and his heart pounded. (7: 23)

What begins, seemingly, as a disavowal of narrative authority in the failure to identify the character's mental state turns out to be a show of narrative prowess: it is not that the narrator cannot pin down his thoughts; it is simply that he must catalogue them all, and classify them as unclear sensations, in order to provide an accurate portrayal.

Another instance in which these techniques take the main stage is during Bazarov's confession of love to Odintsova. Whereas the parallel scene in *Rudin* gave us no information about the inner state of either Rudin or Natalya, here we have full access to both characters' thoughts and emotions, both in psycho-narration and in interior monologues. The reader is told of Bazarov's powerful and painful passion, Odintsova's simultaneous fear and pity, and then her rapidly flitting thoughts as she tries to make sense of the situation (7: 98). In fact, there is a full narrative report of her emotions, as well as his, throughout their friendship, as Bazarov's feelings grow, producing a troubled mixture with his doubts about romantic love, and Odintsova's interest in Bazarov increases, while she remains unsure of its significance. The result is a much fuller mental and emotional portrait of characters than we saw in *Rudin*.

It is in the final scene of the novel, in which Bazarov's grief-stricken parents visit their son's grave, that the narrator dazzles us once again, taking us simultaneously into the minds of his characters and far beyond the confines of the text:

Неужели их молитвы, их слезы бесплодны? Неужели любовь, святая, преданная любовь не всеильна? О нет! Какое бы страстное, грешное, бунтующее сердце ни скрылось в могиле, цветы, растущие на ней, безмятежно глядят на нас своими невинными глазами: не об одном вечном спокойствии говорят нам они, о том великом спокойствии "равнодушной" природы; они говорят также о вечном примирении и о жизни бесконечной...

Can it really be that their prayers and tears are fruitless? Can it really be that love, holy, devoted love is not stronger than all else? Oh, no! However passionate, sinful, and rebellious was the heart hidden in the grave, the flowers growing upon it gaze serenely upon us with their innocent eyes: not only of eternal peace do they speak to us, about that great peace of "indifferent" nature; they also speak of eternal reconciliation and everlasting life...(7: 188)

It is, of course, Bazarov's parents who believe in the power of their prayers and the restorative value of divine love, it is their resounding "no" in response to their own questions. And yet when we shift to the assurances conveyed by the flowers on the grave, we find ourselves somewhere between the free indirect discourse of the lines above and an all-encompassing narrative statement about life beyond these characters and this text. Is it the narrator or Bazarov's parents who distance themselves from Bazarov's conception of "indifferent" nature by placing the adjective in quotation marks? Are the flowers speaking to the "we" of Bazarov's parents, or to the "we" of the narrator, or even

to the “we” of the readers? The closing lines of the novel are masterful in their ambiguity, in their ability to address each entity simultaneously.

Given these sophisticated narrative developments, it may seem that *Rudin* and *Ottsy i deti* were written by different authors. However, there are still a number of dramatic elements that remain, leading critics to identify Turgenev as a dramatic novelist for the entirety of his career.<sup>51</sup> *Ottsy i deti* is, as are all of Turgenev’s novels, driven by dialogue in the exchange of ideas, punctuated by silences and pauses. It also makes much use of gestures, some of them still placed in parentheses, creating the appearance of stage directions. Important conversations and romantic encounters are still consistently and conveniently observed by eavesdroppers, who then propel the plot by revealing their discoveries. And the basic motor of the plot remains the pattern of stasis and intrusion, as foreign elements (in this case, Bazarov) invade a peaceful space and cause momentous changes in the status quo: this is true of almost all of Turgenev’s novels and plays.

Yet more significant, however, is Turgenev’s consistent use of dramatic plot patterns in structuring his conclusions. *Ottsy i deti* ends with two weddings (Arkady and Katya, Nikolai Petrovich and Fenechka), suggesting comedy, while Bazarov meets an untimely end, which is certainly cast as a tragedy at the end of the novel.<sup>52</sup> There is a solid consistency in this vein of interpretation of all three novels, as *Rudin* also ends with two happy marriages and the tragic death of the eponymous character. The same plot patterns can be found in Turgenev’s own dramatic works, particularly in *Mesiats v derevne*. Through his own dramatic writing and his acute attention to that of others, Turgenev has brought this feature from the stage into his prose works. However supplemented this technique may have been with continually developing narrative techniques and attention to interiority, Turgenev did not abandon it. While it may seem, at first glance, that Turgenev’s novels have left his dramatic beginnings behind, a closer look at the fabric of his works reveals this common thread that runs through each text, binding them all together.

## Conclusion

From the slow beginnings of his novelistic career, when Turgenev was full of doubts and anxiety, he moved forward to write some of the most successful and highly regarded novels of the nineteenth century. In *Rudin*, the evidence of Turgenev’s experience with writing dramas is everywhere, providing a scaffolding on which he built the novel. The dramatic mode of narration takes over the text, creating a unique imbalance of textual forms, which, in spite of the mediocre contemporary reviews, remains the only work of its kind in Turgenev’s oeuvre, and in the Russian novelistic corpus of this period. Apart from its own intrinsic value, however, *Rudin* lays bare the steps along the path to the novel for Turgenev, as he grew in narrative and structural

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<sup>51</sup> To give just one example, Richard Freeborn states that all of Turgenev’s novels can be explained by the “analogy of the theater,” which “provides the skeletal design” for his novelistic construction. Richard Freeborn, *Turgenev: The Novelist’s Novelist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 52, 55.

<sup>52</sup> Lowe 15-27. Costlow has likewise noted the comedic harmony restored by the marriages at the end of *Dvorianskoe gnezdo*, while V.M. Markovich, basing his analysis on the definitions found in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, identifies the novel’s tragic elements. Costlow 81; V.M. Markovich, *I.S. Turgenev i russkii realisticheskii roman XIX veka (I.S. Turgenev and the Nineteenth-Century Russian Realist Novel)* (Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo Leningradskovo Universiteta, 1982), 134-39.

sophistication. Though Turgenev did abandon the narrative style of *Rudin*, it is fitting that he carried the drama with him throughout his career, if not in narrative, then in plot structure and certainly in subject matter. In the difficult decade of the 1850s, Turgenev relied upon drama to help him overcome the double anxiety of trying to produce a novel in a literary atmosphere permeated with novelistic demand. His use of the dramatic form in *Rudin* colorfully illustrates one strand of the Russian novel and its engagement with the dramatic at the momentous mid-century.



## **Chapter 2: “Goncharov’s *Oblomov*: Comedy on the Stage of the Novel”**

Even the casual reader will detect that there is something rather strange about the opening of Goncharov’s novel *Oblomov* (1859). After the eponymous hero and his bumbling servant Zakhar have been introduced, and their comic, almost slapstick interactions have been amply displayed to the reader, the doorbell begins to ring. And then it rings again. And yet again. It happens five times in two chapters, and then twice more toward the end of Part I of the novel. Each ring of the bell ushers in a new guest, right on the heels of the previous one, and our overwhelmed hero hardly has time to catch his breath, while the reader wonders how far the coincidence of so many people dropping in on Oblomov one after another can stretch.

This might seem a necessary narrative intervention, given a hero who refuses to get out of bed. How else could the plot move forward? However, the caricature-like qualities of these visitors and the overwhelming repetition in their movement and language reveal that something more complex is at play. Goncharov is doing more than bringing the outside world to Oblomov’s dusty bedroom; he is using it as a small domestic stage on which he presents these visitors one by one, all of them intent on the same goal: enticing the languid landowner to Ekaterinhof for the 1<sup>st</sup> of May festivities. This “parade of guests,” as it is often called, is a marked and unique moment in the novel, and it is limited to Part I; as Oblomov ventures out into the countryside, St. Petersburg, and even the Vyborg Side, this pattern of repetitive action and language is less pronounced.

Why, then, does Goncharov place this sequence at the very beginning of the novel, where it is likely to create a distorted impression of the poetics of the text to come? Both the composition history of the novel and Goncharov’s personal writings indicate that this dramatic pattern, encompassing the construction of an enclosed space and repetitive entrances, exits, and speeches of the characters, serves as the novelist’s attempted solution to several of his persistent problems with the text: namely, stitching the sections of the novel together and creating a dynamic opening. Part I is often considered the weakest part of the novel, and the dramatic definitely dominates over the novelistic in this section of the text, but in the subsequent sections Goncharov finds a way to balance the two textual forms. Here, as previously, I use the term “dramatic” rather than “theatrical” to indicate a textual form rather than a live performance or behavioral pattern.<sup>53</sup> I use the term “dramatic,” on the contrary, to refer to specific strategies of constructing a text. While not a playwright himself, as Turgenev was, Goncharov reveals in *Oblomov* the importance of dramatic patterns for the Russian novel of the 1850s, even for writers with no experience at all writing for the theater.<sup>54</sup> He relies heavily upon

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<sup>53</sup> I rely upon Elizabeth Burns’ definition of theatricality: “Behavior can be described as ‘theatrical’ only by those who know what drama is [...] Behavior is not therefore theatrical because it is of a certain kind but because the observer recognizes certain patterns and sequences which are analogous to those with which he is familiar in the theater [...] it attaches to any kind of behavior perceived and interpreted by others and described (mentally or explicitly) in theatrical terms.” Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 12-13.

<sup>54</sup> The only evidence of Goncharov ever writing a dramatic text is a brief mention by his chronicler of an unnamed comedy that he read to friends in 1843. A.D. Alekseev, *Letopis’ zhizni i tvorchestva I.A. Goncharova (Chronicle of the Life and Works of I.A. Goncharov)* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1960), 22. I thank Irina Paperno for recalling this comedy.

dramatic patterning in Part One of the novel, but even after he has abandoned this mode of composition, he still incorporates drama in a more nuanced way, as a space and as a metaphor, as well as in the patterns of interaction between characters.

### **Part I, Or Act I: The Opening Scenes of *Oblomov***

The “parade of guests” through the enclosed space of Oblomov’s room in Part I provides the perfect illustration of the dramatic trope of stasis and intrusion, for without these visitors, no action would occur.<sup>55</sup> Turgenev, we recall, relies upon the same strategy in bringing Rudin to Daria Lasunskaja’s estate. In fact, this convention can be frequently found in neoclassical French comedy, which was very popular in the nineteenth-century Russian repertoire; Molière, for instance, uses this plot structure prominently in *Le Misanthrope* (*The Misanthrope*, 1666) and *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (*The Bourgeois Gentleman*, 1670). Although Oblomov has three other rooms besides his bedroom, he never uses them, confining himself to the realm of his messy couch and dusty furniture. The narrator informs us that this state of affairs could have gone on indefinitely: “Неизвестно, долго ли бы еще пробыл он в этой нерешительности, но в передней раздался звонок” (“No one knows how long he would have remained in this indecisive state, had the doorbell not rung in the entry hall”).<sup>56</sup> The pattern of the repetitive movement of the guests, contrasted with Oblomov’s extreme stasis, is particularly consistent for the first three visitors: Volkov, Sudbinsky, and Penkin. The bell rings, the guest is shown in for a short conversation and then departs, leaving Oblomov alone with his thoughts for just a few moments, after which the bell rings again. At no point do these visitors encounter each other; each one spends a discrete amount of time in dialogue with Oblomov and then is whisked off the stage. The dramatic patterning of these visits is heightened by the fact that they take place within the enclosed space of Oblomov’s room, which is akin to a box set, or *stseno-korobka*, a mainstay of French theater as early as the 1820s, after which point it spread to other national theaters, allowing for the intimate presentation of domestic space.<sup>57</sup>

Aside from this repeated pattern of movement, there is a consistent echo in the “lines” of the two speakers in these scenes. Each guest invites Oblomov to Ekaterinhof, and each guest is in turn invited by Oblomov to stay for dinner or tea. In a comical mismatching of intent, all invitations are refused. By even the second guest, the reader already knows the purpose of the visit and can be assured that the invitation and counter-invitation will be made. The interest, then, is found not in *what* will happen, but in *how* it will happen. By the third visitor, Penkin, these invitations are fired in rapid succession:

— Однако мне пора в типографию! — сказал Пенкин. — Я, знаете, зачем пришел к вам? Я хотел предложить вам ехать в Екатеринбург; у меня коляска. Мне завтра надо статью писать о гулянье: вместе бы наблюдать

<sup>55</sup> For a full analysis of this dramatic trope, see David Ball, *Backwards and Forwards: A Technical Manual for Reading Plays* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 19-25.

<sup>56</sup> Ivan Goncharov, *Oblomov: Roman v chetyrekh chastiakh (Oblomov: A Novel in Four Parts)*, ed. L.S. Geiro (Leningrad: Nauka (Literaturnye pamiatniki), 1987), 17. Subsequent references to this text will appear parenthetically in the body text. All translations in the body text and notes are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>57</sup> Oscar Brockett and Franklin Hildy, *History of the Theater*, Ninth Edition (Boston : Allyn and Bacon, 2003), 313.

стали, чего бы не заметил я, вы бы сообщили мне; веселее бы было. Поедемте...— Нет, нездоровится, — сказал Обломов, морщась и прикрываясь одеялом, — сырости боюсь, теперь еще не высохло. А вот вы бы сегодня обедать пришли: мы бы поговорили... У меня два несчастья...— Нет, наша редакция вся у Сен-Жоржа сегодня, оттуда и поедем на гулянье. А ночью писать и чем свет в типографию отсылать. До свидания.

“But it’s time for me to get to the printing house!” Penkin said, “You know, why did I come to see you? I wanted to invite you to come to Ekaterinhof. I have a carriage. I have to write an article about the festivities—we could observe everything together, and whatever I don’t notice, you can tell me about. It would be more fun that way. Let’s go...”

“No, I don’t feel well,” said Oblomov, frowning and covering himself with his blanket, “I’m afraid of the damp—it hasn’t dried out yet. But why don’t you come for dinner today, and we can talk...I have these two problems...”

“No, our editorial staff is at St. George’s today, and we’re going from there to the festivities. Tonight I’ll write, and at dawn I’ll send my article to the printing house. Goodbye.” (26)

Penkin hardly pauses to take a breath between offering Oblomov his invitation to Ekaterinhof and refusing Oblomov’s invitation to dinner; having performed his part of the conversation, Penkin departs. The accelerated speed of this scene highlights its artificiality and improbability; by this, the third, exchange, both Oblomov and his guest resemble dolls on tightly wound springs, each trying to speak his lines as quickly as possible.

Every conversation also follows the same pattern of dialogue and monologue. After each guest departs, Oblomov has a few moments to consider the lifestyle of his interlocutor. He roundly condemns the bustling social life and career obligations of each one in turn, grateful to retain the luxury of lying on his couch, but before he can conclude his thoughts, the bell rings again, and the process starts anew. Here is one prominent example, following the visit of the socially active Volkov:

"В десять мест в один день — несчастный! — думал Обломов. — И это жизнь! — Он сильно пожал плечами. — Где же тут человек? На что он раздробляется и рассыпается? Конечно, недурно заглянуть и в театр и влюбиться в какую-нибудь Лидию... она миленькая! В деревне с ней цветы рвать, кататься— хорошо; да в десять мест в один день — несчастный!" — заключил он, перевертываясь на спину и радуясь, что нет у него таких пустых желаний и мыслей, что он не мыкается, а лежит вот тут, сохраняя свое человеческое достоинство и свой покой. Новый звонок прервал его размышления. Вошел новый гость.

“Going ten places in one day—how miserable!” thought Oblomov, “What a life!” He shrugged his shoulders emphatically. “Where is the man in that? Why does he shatter and scatter himself in so many different directions? Of course, it’s not a bad thing to peek into the theater and fall in love with some Lydia...she’s pretty! You can pick flowers with her in the country and go out on a boat, and that’s

good. But to go ten places in one day—that's miserable!" he concluded, turning onto his back and rejoicing that he did not have such empty desires and thoughts, that he was not wandering around anywhere, but lying right here, preserving his human dignity and his peace. Another ring of the bell interrupted his thoughts. A new guest entered. (20)

This type of dramatic action, marked by the repetition of language and movement through an enclosed space, is more at home on the stage than in the novel. In fact, in his essay *Le Rire : essai sur la signification du comique* (*Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, 1900) Henri Bergson identifies this very type of repetition, building up to the point of appearing mechanical and automatized, as the hallmark of stage comedy.<sup>58</sup> In these opening scenes there is indeed something at work beyond the logic of the novel—it is the logic of the stage.<sup>59</sup>

Several scholars have made mention of this dramatic quality in the opening pages of *Oblomov*, and I use their observations as a foundation for my analysis. Elena Krasnoshchekova notes that these characters enter and exit the stage just as in a classical comedy, and that there is no motivation for their appearance in the plot of the novel; she identifies the first three guests, who appear only once in the novel, as “vnesiuzhetnye personazhi” (“figures superfluous to the plot”).<sup>60</sup> Julie Buckler, examining the novel through the lens of the opera, also notes the similarity of Oblomov's room to a stage set through which the visitors pass, and she reads their performances as arias.<sup>61</sup> The opera does have an undeniable presence in *Oblomov*, not least through Olga's singing of “Casta Diva” as part of her courtship with the indolent hero, but I believe there are two key points about the sequence of visitors that link it more closely to the dramatic tradition than the operatic.

The first is that these are not monologic performances, but *dialogues*; Oblomov does not merely watch and listen, but offers his own thoughts and invitations in response to those of his guests. Oblomov discusses love and art with Volkov; he asks Sudbinsky for news from the office and congratulates him on his upcoming wedding; and he engages in a heated philosophical argument about man and literature with Penkin. These are not individual arias, but rather dialogues in which both parties actively participate. Moreover, these dialogues are marked by repetitive elements that mirror the repetition of movement; Oblomov always greets his visitors with the same nervous exclamation “He

<sup>58</sup> Henri Bergson, *Le Rire* in *Œuvres* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959), 383-485.

<sup>59</sup> To my knowledge, Galya Diment is the only scholar who finds a logical explanation for the artificiality of the “parade of guests;” drawing on a contemporary source cited in the notes to the *Literaturnye pamiatniki* (*Literary Monuments*) edition of *Oblomov*, she explains that on May 1<sup>st</sup> the whole population of St. Petersburg would have been heading to Ekaterinhof. Galya Diment, “The Precocious Talent of Ivan Goncharov,” in *Goncharov's Oblomov: A Critical Companion*, ed. Galya Diment (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 15. This historical context is important, but I do not believe that it minimizes the dramatic quality of the text, located in its repetition of speech and movement. A more standard reading is provided by Richard Freeborn, who emphasizes the “theatrical contrivance” of the scenes with the visitors. Richard Freeborn, *The Rise of the Russian Novel: Studies in the Russian Novel from Eugene Onegin to War and Peace* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 146.

<sup>60</sup> Elena Krasnoshchekova, *Goncharov: Mir tvorchestva (Goncharov: World of Creation)* (St. Petersburg: Pushkinskii Fond, 1997), 231. She makes the same point in her earlier work, *Oblomov I.A. Goncharova* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1970), 11-12.

<sup>61</sup> Julie Buckler, *The Literary Lorgnette* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 159.

подходите, не подходите: вы с холода!” (“Don’t come near me, don’t come near me—you are just in from the cold!”), and he refuses all of the invitations with the same stubborn certainty (17). Bergson addresses such repetition of language as well, identifying what is done or said automatically as the heart of comedy, “that mechanical element which resembles a piece of clockwork wound up once for all and capable of working automatically.”<sup>62</sup> Oblomov’s words are nothing if not automatic; they continue to function in ignorance of the actual state of affairs in the outside world. Oblomov has no idea that it is a warm day in May, but continues to bellow his entreaty to his guests not to approach him as if it were a snowy day in December.

The second element aligning these exchanges with the dramatic tradition is the names of the visitors. Much has been made of the comical and caricature-like names of Oblomov’s first three visitors: Volkov, Sudbinsky, and Penkin. More than just names, they illustrate the characters’ personalities: Volkov, from the word for “wolf,” is set on seizing life’s pleasures; Sudbinsky, the “man of fate,” is concerned above all with success and wealth; Penkin, whose name suggests either a man foaming at the mouth or derives from the English word “pen,” is a writer who speaks at length about the literature and social issues about which he is most passionate.<sup>63</sup> Several scholars have considered these names and their illustration of the characters as reminiscent of Gogol’s *Mertvye dushi* (*Dead Souls*, 1842).<sup>64</sup> Still others have read these characters as “types,” indicating their social category in the style of the *fiziologicheskii ocherk* (“physiological sketch”) popular in the 1840s.<sup>65</sup> I would argue that Goncharov’s more immediate inspiration for this practice of naming and characterization is actually eighteenth-century neoclassical comedy. These are *noms parlants*, or “speaking names,” a perennial convention of both Western and Russian neoclassical drama, still very popular on the nineteenth-century Russian stage.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Bergson 457-458.

<sup>63</sup> These *noms parlants* appear with some frequency in Part I. For instance, Oblomov and Sudbinskii discuss a bumbling clerk who is named Svinkin (from the Russian word for swine), and Oblomov’s corrupt bailiff is appropriately named Krivoi (“Crooked”) (Goncharov 22, 31).

<sup>64</sup> Nikita Prutskov points out the similarities between Oblomov and Gogol’s Manilov, as does Krasnoshchekova. Nikita Prutskov, *Masterstvo Goncharova-romanista* (*The Mastery of the Novelist Goncharov*) (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1962), 87; Krasnoshchekova (1997), 227.

<sup>65</sup> For instance, Krasnoshchekova (1997), 231.

<sup>66</sup> Simon Karlinsky provides an overview of the common features of eighteenth-century Russian neoclassical comedy, as derived from the earlier works of such playwrights as Molière and Racine, in his study of Russian drama of the seventeenth through the nineteenth century. Simon Karlinsky, *Russian Drama from its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 160, 289, 299-300.

To give an example close at hand for Goncharov, we may look specifically at Fonvizin’s comedy *Nedorosl’* (*The Minor*, 1782). A neoclassical comedy par excellence, Fonvizin’s play is true to the three dramatic unities, the didactic moral focus common in neoclassicism, and, most importantly for the analysis at hand, it follows the practice of bestowing upon the dramatis personae names that illustrate their character. Suffice it to recall Prostackov (“Simpleton”) and Skotinin (“Beastly”); the morally upright are called by such names as Pravdin (“Truthful”), Milon (“Sweet”), and Sophia (“Wisdom”). Aside from these characters whose names serve as moral markers, there are also three figures in the comedy who are named for their professions or chief preoccupations, in the same manner that Oblomov’s visitors are named. These characters are the tutors to the eponymous minor, the impossibly dull Mitrofan Prostackov. Kuteikin, a local deacon, has a name deriving from the raisin and rice dish *kutia*, which is eaten at Orthodox ceremonies; he teaches Mitrofan grammar from his prayer books. Tsyfirkin, whose name comes from the Russian word for “number,” accordingly teaches Mitrofan arithmetic. Finally, the German Vral’man, whose name derives

There is plenty of reason to believe that neoclassical drama was fresh in Goncharov's mind as he was writing *Oblomov* in the 1850s. The bulk of the repertoire of the Imperial stage was devoted to Russian and French neoclassical plays during this period, and Goncharov was no stranger to the theater.<sup>67</sup> There are numerous records of his involvement in the world of theater in his formative years and throughout his life. To give just a few examples, he frequented Moscow's Malyi Theater in the 1830s where he was very fond of the actors Shchepkin and Mochalov. He attended performances at the Bol'shoi Theater, the French Theater, the Mikhailovsky Theater, and his local Simbirsk theater while visiting family, and in the 1850s he was present at Ostrovsky's reading of his play *Semeinaia kartina*.<sup>68</sup> From 1856-58 he was part of a literary-theatrical committee to determine the repertoire for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian theater; and as a censor he worked tirelessly to ensure that the plays of such dramatists as Ostrovsky and Pisemsky were approved for publication. Additionally, in his autobiography, Goncharov cites Fonvizin's neoclassical comedy par excellence *Nedorosl'* (*The Minor*, 1782) as one of the first literary works he read as a child, and in 1856 his work as a censor brought a new edition of Fonvizin's complete collected works across his desk for his approval.<sup>69</sup> Goncharov even includes a direct reference to Fonvizin's play in *Oblomov*; discussing the shortcomings of the education of young Ilya Oblomov in contrast to the rigorous schooling of his friend Andrei Stolz, the narrator reflects: "Времена Простаковых и Скотининых миновались давно" ("The days of the Prostakovs and Skotinins passed long ago") (110). The time of the Prostakovs and Skotinins may have passed, but not the time of the Penkins and Sudbinskys.<sup>70</sup>

There is another element of Fonvizin's comedy that may have served as a point of reference for Goncharov, in addition to the neoclassical convention of *noms parlants*: the

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from the verb "to lie," does not attempt to teach Mitrofan anything at all. In what provides a possible link between *Oblomov* and *Nedorosl'*, Vral'man accidentally reveals, in his broken Russian, that he was once a coach driver in Ekaterinhof, just the place that Oblomov's friends are trying to take him: "Я савсегда ахотник пыл смотреть публик. Пыфало, о праснике съгутца в Катрингоф кареты с хоспотами. Я фсе на них смотрю. Пыфало, не сойту ни на минуту с косел" ("I was allways fond of vatching ze public. On holidays all ze carriages vit ze gentlemen vould come to 'Katerinhof. I vould vatch zem and vatch zem.. Sometimes I vould neffer step down for a minute from ze coach box"). Denis Fonvizin, *Sobranie sochinenii v dvukh tomakh (Collected Works in Two Volumes)*, ed. G. Makogonenko (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoi Literatury, 1959), 1: 146. I have tried to match Vral'man's substandard and German-inflected speech in my translation.

<sup>67</sup> For a detailed treatment of the Russian repertoire of the early to mid-nineteenth century, see *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra v semi tomakh (History of the Russian Dramatic Theater in Seven Volumes)*, ed. N.G. Zograf (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1977-87), Vols. 3 and 4.

<sup>68</sup> Alekseev 18, 23, 34, 51, 52, 60, 65, 79, 85, 86, 87, 98, 100, 102.

<sup>69</sup> Ivan Goncharov, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh (Collected Works in Eight Volumes)*, ed. A. Rybasov (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Khudozhestvennoi Literatury, 1956), 8: 221, 228; Alekseev 64. Goncharov also remained interested in drama in his later years; his essay "Mil'on terzanii" ("A Thousand Agonies," 1871), is still considered one of the best critical works on Griboedov's *Gore ot uma (Woe from Wit, 1825)*.

<sup>70</sup> It is also possible that these names may have filtered down to Goncharov through the very contemporary form of vaudeville. The names Volkov, Sudbinskii, and Penkin use three of the most common endings for Russian surnames, a practice also seen in vaudeville of the 1830s, still popular in mid-nineteenth-century Russia. To give just one example, in Piotr Karatygin's vaudeville *Dom na Peterburgskoi storone (The House on Petersburg Side, 1838)* the hero's friends are named Bushuev ("Raging/storming"), Dudkin ("Fife"), and Ukhorskii ("Dashing"). Piotr Karatygin, *Dom na peterburgskoi storone* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1970). I am grateful to Anan Muza for this suggestion of the link between vaudeville and the novel.

sequence of the three lessons given to the eponymous minor by his tutors. Although they do not enter and exit individually, as Oblomov's guests do, the tutors give their lessons one by one, each immediately following the one preceding him. Since the reader or spectator has already become acquainted with young Mitrofan's resistance to education, it is understood that these lessons will be failures; the comic interest lies again not in what will happen, but in how it will happen. Tsyfirkin's lesson in division is interrupted by Mitrofan's mother; Kuteikin mocks Mitrofan's ignorance by having him recite humiliating phrases in Old Church Slavic, and finally, Vral'man insists to Mitrofan and his mother that studying will only send the young boy to an early grave.<sup>71</sup> Despite their differing approaches, the tutors do have a unity of purpose, and a unity of comic effect, as do Oblomov's guests. Significantly, the dramatic element that informs the opening pages of *Oblomov*, the parade of guests with their *noms parlants*, can be traced to the neoclassical dramatic tradition, suggesting an immediate source for Goncharov in composing his text.

After following the pattern of the "parade of guests" (arrival, invitations, refusals, and departure) three times in the opening pages of *Oblomov*, Goncharov, as if sensing that this method of narrative cannot be sustained indefinitely, alters the presentation of Oblomov's next two visitors, Alekseev and Tarantsev. The doorbell rings in rapid succession, just as before, and the same invitations are made, but the narrator provides a much fuller characterization of these two figures, including their educational background, family history, and motives for seeking Oblomov's friendship. Accordingly, these two figures play a larger role in the novel than the first three guests, who simply disappear after their visits. These two characters diverge, if only slightly, from the pattern of the first three visitors, allowing the narrative to break free from the abrupt sequencing of the parade of guests in the first chapters. Following the appearance of Alekseev and Tarantsev, the narrator shifts into the personal histories of both Oblomov and Zakhar, leading eventually up to the idyllic depiction of Oblomov's provincial childhood in chapter nine, "Son Oblomova" ("Oblomov's Dream").

In spite of these narrative developments, Goncharov is not quite ready to let go of the pattern of stasis and intrusion. There are still two more visitors—the doctor who tells Oblomov that he must change his ways, and Stolz, whose arrival marks the end of Part I and the movement of the narrative into new potentialities and spaces: social encounters in the capital and Oblomov's romance at his summer cottage. If all of Oblomov's guests can be viewed as narrative catalysts, who appear in order to urge the main character out of bed and into the larger open space of the novel, by the sixth visitor, the doctor, this urgency has reached a fever pitch. Here is an already panicked Oblomov receiving instructions from the doctor on where he must go:

— Поезжайте в Киссинген или в Эмс, — начал доктор, — там проживете июнь и июль; пейте воды; потом отправляйтесь в Швейцарию или в Тироль: лечиться виноградом. Там проживете сентябрь и октябрь...  
 — Черт знает что, в Тироль! — едва слышно прошептал Илья Ильич.  
 — Потом куда-нибудь в сухое место, хоть в Египет...  
 "Вона!" — подумал Обломов.

"Go to Kissingen or Ems," the doctor began, "And stay there for June and July

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<sup>71</sup> Fonvizin 1: 45-47.

and drink the waters. Then set out for Switzerland or Tyrol and take the grape cure. Stay there for September and October..."

"Tyrol! The devil knows what!" Ilya Ilich whispered, barely audibly.

"Then go to some sort of dry place, say, Egypt..."

"Oh, great!" Oblomov thought. (68)

The man who cannot be convinced to go to Ekaterinhof will certainly not muster the energy to travel to Europe or Africa, but it seems that the longer Oblomov stays in bed, the more desperate, and distant, are the proposals of travel by these narrative agents.<sup>72</sup> There is much more at stake here than rousing a lazy character from bed; if the bedroom represents the enclosed box set of domestic space in drama, then the earnest appeals made by the visitors imply a dual conflict: the struggle to get Oblomov into the open space of the world around him, and the struggle to take the narrative out of the enclosed space of drama and into the larger space of the novel.

Of course, it is Stolz, the seventh visitor and Oblomov's childhood friend, who eventually coaxes the languid hero from bed. He too, tries to convince Oblomov to venture abroad to Europe and is at least able to get Oblomov out of his room and into the social setting of Petersburg. As we are thrown into the emotional twists and turns of Oblomov's relationship with Olga, resulting almost immediately from his first forays into the outside world, we soon forget these early visitors and their caricatured personalities and names, along with the anomalous opening of the text. These later sections of the novel make the dramatic patterning of Part I even more pronounced by contrast, and the reader wonders what role the parade of guests plays in the novel as a whole.

### **The Long Prelude to the "Parade of Guests"**

Given the broad spatial and narrative expanse of the rest of the novel, why does Goncharov use this spatially enclosed dramatic pattern to open *Oblomov*? The answer to this question lies in the textual history of the novel. Goncharov's composition of the text spanned an entire decade, from 1849-1859. He wrote and published the first part, "Son Oblomova," which makes up chapter nine of Part I of the completed novel, in 1849. He worked on the novel intermittently in the 1850s, including during his voyage on the Frigate *Pallas* from 1852-55; in this time he wrote much of Part I and sections of Part II.

The difficulties of composition were accompanied by Goncharov's worries about the censorship of his novel; several letters of the period testify that Goncharov would have sooner stopped writing *Oblomov* altogether than have it torn to pieces by the censors.<sup>73</sup> Even after the censorship was relaxed, however, Goncharov still doubted his ability to complete the novel. A large part of the problem was the pressure he felt to live up to his previous literary successes. His first novel, *Obyknovennaia istoriia* (*A Common*

<sup>72</sup> Significantly, one of the places Oblomov's visitors encourage him to visit is the theater. Volkov lists regular trips to the Russian and French theaters among the many charms of life, and the doctor suggests that attending the theater and masquerade balls in Paris will have a transformative effect upon the ailing patient (19,68). Many thanks to Anna Muza for reminding me of these references.

<sup>73</sup> These letters are cited in L.S. Geiro's essay "Istoriia sozdaniia i publikatsii romana *Oblomov*," included in the *Literaturnye pamiatniki* edition of the novel. L.S. Geiro, "Istoriia sozdaniia i publikatsii romana *Oblomov*" in Ivan Goncharov, *Oblomov: Roman v chetyrekh chastiakh*, ed. L.S. Geiro (Leningrad: Nauka (Literaturnye pamiatniki), 1987), 554.



*Story*, 1847), delighted readers and critics alike, most notably Vissarion Belinsky, who praised the work highly in his influential essay “Vzgliad na russkuiu literaturu 1847 goda” (“A Look at Russian Literature in 1847,” 1847); the first section of what was to become *Oblomov*, “Son Oblomova,” was also met with great critical enthusiasm upon its publication in 1849.<sup>74</sup> Feeling defeated by his inability to move forward with *Oblomov* and crushed by the critical demand for him to continue writing and publishing it, Goncharov wrote in an 1856 letter to Elizaveta Tolstaya:

Вы спрашиваете о романе: ах, одни ли Вы спрашиваете! Редакторы спрашивают пуще Вас и трое разом [...] А романа нет как нет [...] Хандра гложет до физического расстройство, а между тем судьба призывает меня к суматохе, к усиленной деятельности; как я извернусь, не знаю; хочется бежать и от дел, и от людей, а нельзя.

You ask about my novel: oh, if only it were just you who were asking! Editors ask more than you do, and three at a time [...] And there is still no novel [...] Depression gnaws at me to the point of physical disorder, but all the while fate calls me to turmoil, to intense activity. How I will dodge this, I do not know. I want to run away from the task, and from people, but I cannot.<sup>75</sup>

In 1857 Goncharov, seeing no other way out, responded to one of these hounding editors; he wrote to Mikhail Katkov, the editor of the journal *Russkii vestnik* (*Russian Herald*), asking whether he might be interested in publishing only Part I as a completed text, with no further sections to follow.<sup>76</sup>

The unexpected turning point in the composition of *Oblomov* occurred during a summer trip to Marienbad in 1857, sometimes called “the Marienbad miracle.” Upon his arrival at the German spa, Goncharov found himself inspired to complete the novel, and he wrote the majority of the remaining parts in the course of his seven-week stay, as his ecstatic letters to his friends confirm.<sup>77</sup> He wrote the final sections of the novel and revised the work as a whole in 1858; it was finally published, one part at a time, in *Otechestvennye Zapiski* (*Notes of the Fatherland*) beginning in January 1859.

Nothing gave Goncharov more trouble in his revision process than Part I of the novel. In a November 1858 letter to his close friend Ivan Lkhovskiy Goncharov wrote: “За десять лет хуже, слабее, бледнее я ничего не читал первой половины 1-й части: это ужасно! Я несколько дней сряду лопатами выгребал навоз, и всё еще много!” (“I have not read anything worse, weaker, and paler than the first half of Part I [of *Oblomov*] in ten years: it is awful! I have spent several days raking out the manure with shovels, and there is still a lot left!”)<sup>78</sup> In December 1858, even before the first part of

<sup>74</sup> V.G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (*Complete Collected Works*) (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1953-59), 10: 326-44; Positive reviews of “Son Oblomova” were published in *Otechestvennye Zapiski* (*Notes of the Fatherland*) 1850 No. 1, Section 5 and (by Nekrasov) in *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*) 1849 No. 4, Section 3.

<sup>75</sup> This letter is not included in Goncharov's *Sobranie sochinenii* (*Collected Works*), but it was published in *Golos Minuvshago* (*A Voice from the Past*) 1913, No. 12, 245.

<sup>76</sup> This letter is not included in Goncharov's *Sobranie sochinenii*, but is cited in A.G. Tseitlin, *I.A. Goncharov* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1950), 160-61.

<sup>77</sup> These letters appear in Goncharov, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh*, 8: 275-97.

<sup>78</sup> Goncharov, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh*, 8: 302.

*Oblomov* was published, he implored Lev Tolstoy not to read it: “Не читайте 1-й части Обломова, а если удосужитесь, то почитайте 2-ю часть и 3-ю: они писаны после, а та в 1849 году и не годится” (“Do not read Part I of *Oblomov*, but if you find the time, read Parts II and III. They were written later, but Part I was written in 1849 and is no good”).<sup>79</sup>

It seems that a large part of the problem for Goncharov was the dissonance between the *Oblomov* of Part I and the *Oblomov* of the later parts of the novel. The contemporary critic Aleksander Druzhinin expounded upon this problem in his review of Goncharov’s novel, which was first published in 1859 in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* (*Library for Reading*): “Поработав и тяжело поработав над невозможною задачею, г. Гончаров наконец убедился, что ему не [...] загрузить пропасти, лежащей между двумя Обломовыми [...] Убедясь в этом, автор романа махнул рукой и подписал под первую часть романа все объясняющую цифру 49 года” (“Having worked and worked, painfully, at an impossible task, Mr. Goncharov finally became convinced that he could not [...] overcome the abyss lying between the two *Oblomovs* [...] Convinced of this, the author of the novel threw up his hands and wrote on Part I of the novel the all-explaining number of the year 1849”).<sup>80</sup> This review, along with Goncharov’s placement of the date 1849 on Part I, confirms the responses of many readers that *Oblomov* is actually made up of two very different novels, marked by divergent characterizations and narrative style. Alexander Tseitlin, writing almost a century later, echoes this reading:

Уже современная Гончарову критика упрекала романиста в длиннотах и статичности экспозиции. Это отчасти верно: начало первой части загромождено появлением Волково, Судьбинского, и Пенкина—людей, которые более никогда не появятся в романе и которые в день екатерингофского гуляния почему-то столпились около ложа Ильи Ильича. Гончаров сохранил этот рудимент первоначального композиционного плана в целях всесторонней характеристики героя.

Critics contemporary to Goncharov already reproached the novelist for the unnecessarily long and static nature of his exposition. It is partly true: the beginning of Part I is encumbered by the appearance of Volkov, Sudbinsky and Penkin—figures who do not appear again in the novel and who for some reason have all crowded around Илья Ильич’s couch on the day of the festivities at Ekaterinhof. Goncharov preserved this rudiment of his original composition plan for the purpose of a thorough characterization of his hero.<sup>81</sup>

The critical consensus is impossible to miss: that the “parade of guests” is a relic of an early plan of the novel, and that Goncharov, despite all his efforts, was unable to overcome its static and contrived nature when completing and revising the text. In spite of its illustration of the eponymous hero (if only a negative illustration, showing the reader a wan *Oblomov* against the vibrant backdrop of his visitors), Goncharov and his

<sup>79</sup> Ibid 8: 303.

<sup>80</sup> Aleksandr Druzhinin, “*Oblomov*. Roman I.A. Goncharova” in *Literaturnaia kritika* (*Literary Criticism*), ed. N. Skatova (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1983), 299.

<sup>81</sup> Tseitlin 186.

contemporaries and critics found that the weaknesses override the strengths of the novel's opening.

Given both the authorial and critical concern about the weakness of Part I, it would certainly seem that the "parade of guests" and the overwhelmingly dramatic patterning of movement, dialogue, and names in the opening of the novel were precisely the problem issues for Goncharov. In fact, the *opposite* is true; this section of Part I was actually Goncharov's attempted *solution* of the problem. Although many scholars, including Tseitlin, have assumed that the "parade of guests" was written in 1849-50 and have thus associated it with the *fiziologicheskii ocherk*, a form at the height of its popularity in the 1840s, and with the Gogolian era of Russian literature, the manuscripts of the text suggest otherwise.<sup>82</sup> Through extensive work with these manuscripts, L.S. Geiro has discovered that the visits of Volkov, Sudbinsky, Penkin, and the doctor were actually written at the very last moment before the novel's publication, in 1858.<sup>83</sup> Despondent over the text of Part I, Goncharov must have added these episodes at the eleventh hour to bolster the text.

This fact has an important bearing upon the role of drama as a narrative form for the Russian novel of the 1850s; it indicates that Goncharov's recourse to drama occurred not in the early stages of planning and writing *Oblomov* in the late 1840s, but actually an entire decade later, when the Russian novel was on the brink of entering its state of established maturity, the 1860s.<sup>84</sup> Thus, Turgenev's use of dramatic strategies to accomplish the narration of interiority cannot be viewed as an isolated incident, or as the natural result of a playwright attempting to write a novel, but rather it is part of a larger trend of the Russian novel of the 1850s. As Bakhtin has so famously argued, the novel is a singularly omnivorous genre, and in this moment of the development of the Russian novel, drama served as more than an inspiration to writers: it also formed the backbone of their texts in both narrative strategies and structural patterns. It is drama that offers the solution to some of Goncharov's most persistent difficulties in composing his novel.

### **The Persistence of Comedy in *Oblomov***

The opening "parade of guests" stands out as a markedly dramatic moment in *Oblomov*, one in which the dramatic patterns overcome the novelistic, but it is certainly not the only element in the text that indicates Goncharov's use of drama in constructing

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<sup>82</sup> Another example of this view is found in Krasnoshchekova 1997, 231. Her argument is based on the notion that the guests are representative of their social milieux, as the "types" of the *ocherk* often were; it is true that Volkov, Sudbinsky, and Penkin do represent larger social elements, but taken in conjunction with their names and their repetitive patterns of movement and dialogue, it is apparent that they are far closer to the dramatic archetypes of neoclassical comedy.

<sup>83</sup> Geiro 593. This conclusion is based on the fact that these episodes are missing from the all of the manuscripts of the novel, even those as late as 1857-58, and they appear for the first time in the published text of 1859.

<sup>84</sup> In fact, it would seem that Goncharov had drama very much on the mind when he was carrying out the final revisions of the novel in late 1858; Geiro notes that he also added the following sentence explaining the tête-à-tête between Oblomov and Olga at this time: "В этой комедии или трагедии, смотря по обстоятельствам, оба действующие лица являются почти всегда с одинаковым характером: мучителя или мучительницы и жертвы" ("In this comedy or tragedy, depending on the circumstances, both of the dramatis personae almost always have the same part to play: the tormentor or the tormented, the victim") (Geiro 598, Goncharov 182).

his novel. The influence of the dramatic remains, but it becomes more nuanced and balanced with the novelistic elements. It is worth noting, however, that Oblomov's sedentary character remains the same. The visitors urging Oblomov to get out of bed are replaced by Olga, who must entreat him endlessly to come and visit her in Petersburg; as in these opening exchanges, Oblomov finds one excuse after another to stay at home in his apartment on the Vyborg Side (the river between them is not frozen over yet, or the bridge between the two sides of the city is not open). Significantly, Oblomov repeatedly complains about having to meet Olga at the opera, and he has a crisis of self when he overhears several dandies talking about him; like many nineteenth-century literary characters, he fears he is more of a spectacle than the performance on stage (265, 248-49).

There is one aspect of the text that is dramatic and theatrically evocative from beginning to end: the comedy of Oblomov's exchanges with his servant, Zakhar.<sup>85</sup> By the time the visitors begin arriving at Gorokhovaia Street, Zakhar has already been in and out of Oblomov's room four times, while the master continues to lie on his couch, refusing to get up for any reason. These exchanges between Oblomov and Zakhar actually set the stage, so to speak, for the "parade of guests" that is soon to come; they create the pattern of movement contrasted with extreme stasis that holds for the rest of Part I of the novel.

The comedy lies not only in the mechanism of repetition (seen here just as much as in Oblomov's exchanges with his visitors), but also in the complete failure of communication between the two parties. The first time Oblomov calls Zakhar, Oblomov does not even notice that he has appeared in the room; when Zakhar eventually asks what his master wishes, Oblomov replies: "Звал? Зачем же это я звал — не помню!" ("I called you? Why is it that I called you? I can't remember!") (11). Fifteen minutes later, Oblomov calls again, and Zakhar waits for two minutes in silence before the master's request is made: to find the letter sent by his bailiff. When no progress is made on this task (as Zakhar later points out, it is rather absurd to ask an illiterate man to find a particular letter), Oblomov calls him back again to find his handkerchief. In the first instance of the consistent physical comedy of their exchanges, Oblomov is actually lying on his own handkerchief, and, continuing the pattern of comic repetition, he is also lying on the letter that he is so desperately seeking (13, 31). Absentmindedness, expertly displayed here by Oblomov, is yet another element of the comic pointed out by Bergson; Oblomov has no awareness of himself, or of the world around him.<sup>86</sup>

The repetition of this comedy, both physical and verbal, has not escaped the notice of critics, many of whom have identified the Oblomov-Zakhar relationship as a comic one.<sup>87</sup> In fact, much of Zakhar's intended service to Oblomov is pure slapstick.

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<sup>85</sup> This dramatic pattern also has a long lineage, tracing back to the eighteenth-century plays of Pierre Beaumarchais.

<sup>86</sup> Bergson 456. This is the same absent-mindedness we saw in Oblomov's constant cry to his visitors to stay away from him because of the cold air he assumed they brought in from outside.

<sup>87</sup> Vsevolod Setchkarev refers to the exchanges between Oblomov and Zakhar as "sheer comedy scenes," while Renato Poggioli states that Zakhar "belongs to the sphere of high comedy." Vsevolod Setchkarev, *Ivan Goncharov: His Life and Works* (Würzburg: Jal-Verlag, 1974), 134; Renato Poggioli, *The Phoenix and the Spider* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 42. Ehre makes a very brief mention of the applicability of Bergson's notion of the comedy of mechanical repetition to the relationship between Zakhar and Oblomov, but he does this mostly in passing. Milton Ehre, "Meaning in *Oblomov*," in *Ivan A. Goncharov: Leben, Werk und Wirkung*, ed. Peter Thiergen (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1994), 209.

Here is just one description of Zakhar's consistent clumsiness, found in Part I of the novel:

Если он несет чрез комнату кучу посуды или других вещей, то с первого же шага верхние вещи начинают дезертировать на пол. Сначала полетит одна; он вдруг делает позднее и бесполезное движение, чтоб помешать ей упасть, и уронит еще две. Он глядит, разиня рот от удивления, на падающие вещи, а не на те, которые остаются на руках, и оттого держит поднос косо, а вещи продолжают падать, — и так иногда он принесет на другой конец комнаты одну рюмку или тарелку [...]

If he carried a pile of dishes or some other objects across the room, then from his very first step the things on the top would start to desert to the floor. At first one thing would go flying, and Zakhar would make some unhelpful belated movement to try to keep it from falling, dropping two more things in the process. His mouth gaping in disbelief, he would look at the falling items and not at the ones still in his hands, and because of this, his grip on the tray would turn it sideways, and things would continue to fall—and so he would sometimes make it to the other side of the room with nothing but a glass or a plate intact [...] (57-58)

Bergson would identify something of the mechanical nature of comedy in this scene as well. His argument that the humor of human clumsiness is found in the mechanical continuation of a body in motion, its powerlessness to stop itself from falling, illuminates the constant foibles of Zakhar as decidedly comic ones.<sup>88</sup>

In keeping with the general aesthetic of comic repetition in the text, Zakhar falls prey to his own clumsiness on numerous occasions. After this general depiction of his propensity to drop everything that he is carrying, we see him lose his grasp on the tray he is bringing to Oblomov in the following chapter: “Через четверть часа Захар отворил дверь подносом, который держал в обеих руках, и, войдя в комнату, хотел ногой притворить дверь, но промахнулся и ударил по пустому месту: рюмка упала, а вместе с ней еще пробка с графина и булка” (“After a quarter of an hour Zakhar opened the door with his tray, which he held in both hands, and, entering the room, tried to close the door with his foot, but missed the mark and hit an empty space instead. The wine glass fell, and along with it the cork from the decanter and the roll”) (64). This clumsiness and physical comedy becomes such a marker of Zakhar's service to Oblomov that the reader comes to expect it every time he appears, just as the reader expects an invitation to Ekaterinhof to be made and refused in the opening chapters of the novel.

Goncharov was aware of the dominance of these comic exchanges in Part I of the novel, and his dissatisfaction with this section of the text continued long after *Oblomov* was published. In his essay “Neobyknovennaia istoriia” (“An Uncommon Story,” written 1875-79, published 1924) Goncharov expresses his indignation that a French translation of *Oblomov* has been published without his permission, and that it includes only Part I of the novel: “Но дело в том, что в этой первой части заключается только введение, пролог к роману, комическая сцена *Обломова с Захаром*—и только, а романа нет!” (“But the problem is that the first part consists only of an introduction, a prologue to the

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<sup>88</sup> Bergson 391.

novel, the comic scene *Oblomov and Zakhar*—and that is all, there is no novel there!”<sup>89</sup> Goncharov not only calls Part I “not a novel,” but he also places the phrase “*Oblomov and Zakhar*” in italics, giving a proper title for the comedy that is Part I. Although Goncharov was uncomfortable with the comic nature of Part I of his novel, the relationship between Zakhar and Oblomov nonetheless remains constant throughout the text. The significant difference is that in Parts II-IV this element is balanced with character development, a budding romance, and philosophical ponderings.<sup>90</sup> What Goncharov saw as too much in Part I, he successfully integrated in the rest of his novelistic text.

To give just a few examples, in Part II we see that Zakhar’s antics have followed Oblomov to the dacha. Oblomov is infuriated by Zakhar’s inability to carry out the two orders he has given him: to tell visitors that he is not at home and to give a letter for Olga to a servant who arrives from her home. Frustrated that Zakhar has done the former and not the latter, Oblomov asks for the letter back, only to find that Zakhar has carelessly soiled it with his dirty hands (199). In Part III, in spite of his wife Anisya’s efforts to curtail his clumsy habits, Zakhar again drops an entire tray of dishes, only managing to catch a tiny teaspoon (219). Zakhar’s carelessness follows Oblomov to the Vyborg side as well, and he is still dropping dishes even in the final pages of the novel; Zakhar relates his sad fate to Stolz long after the death of his master: “Однажды понес посуду, какую-то богемскую, что ли, полы-то гладкие, скользкие — чтоб им провалиться! Вдруг ноги у меня врозь, вся посуда, как есть с подносом, и грянулась оземь: ну, и прогнали!” (“One day I was carrying some dishes, some kind of Bohemian dishes or something, and the floors were all smooth and slippery—damn them! Suddenly my legs are slipping apart in front of me, and all of the dishes, and the tray too, they all crashed to the floor, and then they threw me out!”) (381). What Milton Ehre has called the “comedy of strained domesticity” stretches from one end of the novel to the other.<sup>91</sup> Zakhar’s antics, as described to Stolz in this final scene, provide a comic counterpoint to the tragedy of Oblomov’s death.

### **Zhenit’ba Gogol’ia i “Zhenit’ba Goncharova” (Gogol’s Marriage and “Goncharov’s Marriage”)**

The patterning of Part I and the consistent comedy of Oblomov’s relationship with Zakhar point to dramatic moments in *Oblomov*, but which dramas, specifically, does it draw from? The answer to this question leads us back to Gogol. While many scholars

<sup>89</sup> I.A. Goncharov, *Neobyknovennaia istoriia: istinnye sobytiia (An Uncommon Story: True Events)* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1999), 151. In keeping with the larger goal of this essay, which is to set the record straight about Turgenev’s alleged plagiarism of Goncharov’s work, Goncharov sees Turgenev as responsible for this incomplete French translation; since Goncharov feels that Part I is the weakest section of the novel, publishing it exclusively will, in his mind, discredit him in the eyes of French readers.

<sup>90</sup> Other scholars have pointed out some elements of this comic relationship in one of Goncharov’s previous works. Setchkarev points out a similar master-servant relationship in the *povest’* “Ivan Savich Podzhabrin,” which Goncharov wrote in 1842 (34-38). Milton Ehre makes the same observation in his book-length study of Goncharov’s works. Milton Ehre, *Oblomov and His Creator: The Life and Art of Ivan Goncharov* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 109. Significantly, Tseitlin compares Podzhabrin to Khlestakov from Gogol’s play *Revizor* (47).

<sup>91</sup> Ehre 1994, 203.

have suggested Gogol's presence in Goncharov's *Oblomov*, the affinity between the two writers that I posit is based on my belief that Goncharov is drawing specifically from Gogol's *dramatic* aesthetic.

The pattern of interaction between Zakhar and Oblomov has a rich dramatic lineage, one that runs directly through Gogol's comedies of the 1830s and 40s. Rare is the reader who can encounter Zakhar and Oblomov without thinking of Gogol's famous Osip and Khlestakov in *Revizor* (*The Government Inspector*, 1836).<sup>92</sup> Act II of Gogol's celebrated play opens with a comic repartee between master and servant that would seem to serve as a direct predecessor for Goncharov's later incarnation of these figures. Khlestakov grumbles that his lazy servant has rumpled his bed (just as Zakhar soiled Oblomov's letter), and Khlestakov demands tobacco from his servant, only to be told that he himself smoked the last of it three days ago.<sup>93</sup> Oblomov has the same argument with Zakhar over the cheese and Madeira he thinks is leftover from the previous day's meal; Zakhar insists that there was nothing left, but the narrator implies that this is because Zakhar ate it himself (63). The similarity between master and servant in both cases leads us to yet another aspect of the comic. The doubling of these characters, alike in their laziness and disorderliness, creates one more instance of comic repetition; we see the same innate inertia and untidiness in both Osip and Khlestakov, both Zakhar and Oblomov.

Similar comparisons have been drawn between *Oblomov* and Gogol's two-act play *Zhenit'ba* (*Marriage*, 1842). Simon Karlinsky, for instance, points out the thematic link between the two works: both feature a lazy and indecisive man who resists the inconvenience of getting married.<sup>94</sup> The similarity, however, is structural as well as thematic. *Zhenit'ba*, like *Oblomov*, opens with a series of exchanges between master and servant; the scenes alternate between Podkolyosin's monologues and his dialogues with Stepan, his servant. In the course of Act I, Podkolyosin calls Stepan three times, asking him each time about some aspect of his wardrobe in preparation for his marriage: has the tailor begun working on his suit; has Stepan bought the shoe polish; has Stepan told the shoemaker that Podkolyosin does not want to get any corns from his new footwear?<sup>95</sup> We have already seen this pattern of the master's introspection, punctuated by demanding exchanges with his servant, in the opening of *Oblomov*. Adding one more element to the likeness between the two works is that fact that Podkolyosin, lost in his musings and fears about his impending marriage and oblivious to the disarray of his surroundings, does not bother to get dressed, with the help of Stepan, until Scene XI of Act I. Podkolyosin thus provides an apt dramatic counterpart and predecessor to Oblomov, who so famously takes one hundred pages to get out of bed.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Fittingly, on April 14, 1860 Goncharov took part in the Literaturnyi Fond production of Gogol's *Revizor*. He played the role of a merchant, and acted alongside fellow writers Dostoevskii, Turgenev, Pisemskii, Nekrasov, Grigorovich, and Druzhinin. Alekseev 107-8.

<sup>93</sup> Nikolai Gogol', *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh* (*Collected Works in Seven Volumes*), ed. S.I. Mashinskii and M.B. Khrapchenko (Moscow, Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1976-78), 4: 25-26.

<sup>94</sup> Simon Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 179. Tseitlin also points out this thematic similarity between Oblomov and Gogol's Podkolyosin in *Zhenit'ba* and Chichikov in *Mertvye dushi* (153).

<sup>95</sup> Gogol' 4: 96-99.

<sup>96</sup> The matchmaker, frustrated with Podkolyosin's inactivity in response to her offer of marriage to Agafya, berates him for three months of indecision: "Да помилуй, отец; уж вот третий месяц хожу к тебе, а

Beyond the comic relationship between master and servant, *Oblomov* also shares with Gogol's plays the repetitive movement and dialogue of the "parade of guests." The bulk of the dramatic action in *Zhenit'ba* is found in the interactions of five suitors, including Podkolyosin, with Agafya Tikhonovna, a young lady who has requested a matchmaker's services to find her a husband. Although they do not arrive and depart in immediate succession, as do Oblomov's "suitors," they have all come in order to plead their case and win the young lady's heart. Before Podkolyosin takes part in this "parade of suitors," however, he is prompted by his own agent, who performs the same function as Oblomov's visitors: his friend Kochkaryov, who insists that Podkolyosin get married. Furthermore, in keeping with the neoclassical convention of *noms parlants*, the suitors have such surnames as Starikov ("Old Man") and Zhevakin (derived from the Russian verb "to chew," suggesting someone who repeats the same things ad nauseam).<sup>97</sup> The central character is no exception; Podkolyosin's name means "under the wheel," fitting in light of his entrapment in the marriage being arranged for him. These suitors are precursors to the ones in *Oblomov*, both in their function and in their names.

Aside from Goncharov's fairly regular theater attendance, beginning in the 1830s in Moscow (during which time it would have been hard for him to miss *Revizor*, one of the most popular features of the mid-nineteenth-century repertoire), Goncharov had several marked encounters with Gogol's plays in the 1850s. In September 1852, Goncharov was present at a literary soiree during which the famous actor Mikhail Shchepkin read Gogol's dramatized "sequels" to *Revizor*— *Teatral'nyi raz'ezd posle predstavlenii novoi komedii* (*A Theater Lets Out After the Performance of a New Comedy*, published 1842) and *Razviazka Revizora* (*The Denouement of The Government Inspector*, written 1846, published 1856).<sup>98</sup> One of Goncharov's favorite actors, Shchepkin had been the first to play the mayor in Gogol's comedy. Goncharov attended this soiree literally days before his departure on the Frigate *Pallas*, on which he would travel until 1855, ruminating and intermittently working on *Oblomov*.

But it would seem that Gogol followed Goncharov even on his journey through Asia. On September 27, 1853, as part of a celebration of the one-year anniversary of the frigate's departure from Russia, the ship's officers staged a production of Gogol's plays *Zhenit'ba* and *Tiazhba* (*The Lawsuit*, 1842).<sup>99</sup> Goncharov, acting as a discerning critic,

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проку-то ни на сколько. Всё сидит в халате, да трубку знай себе покуривает" ("I beg your pardon, sir, but I have been coming to you for three months now and all to no end. All you do is sit around in your dressing gown and smoke away at your pipe") (Gogol' 4: 101). The significance of Podkolyosin's *khalat* (dressing gown) hardly needs to be pointed out to the reader of *Oblomov*.

<sup>97</sup> I do not, of course, mean to suggest that Gogol's plays belong to the neoclassical tradition of the eighteenth century; he borrows numerous elements from this school of playwrighting, which I have highlighted, since these are the same elements used by Goncharov, but it is necessary to acknowledge that Gogol makes significant departures from this tradition, even if there is not space within this chapter to enumerate them. Vasilii Gippius provides an excellent overview of Gogol's borrowings from and adaptations of the eighteenth-century comic tradition. Vasilii Gippius, *Gogol'* (Leningrad: Mysl', 1924; reprint, Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1966), 93-106.

<sup>98</sup> Alekseev 37.

<sup>99</sup> *Tiazhba* is a very short one-act play with only four scenes. Nonetheless, it might be considered a miniature version of the aesthetics of Gogol's longer plays; it also features a visitor who sets the plot in motion and several interactions with a servant, who is summoned loudly by the master. It is found in Gogol' 4: 196-203.



described this production in his travelogue of the trip, *Fregat Pallada (The Frigate Pallas, 1858)*:

Наши и корветные офицеры играли "Женитьбу" Гоголя и "Тяжбу". Сцена была на шканцах корвета. "Тяжба" - на нагасакском рейде! Я знал о приготовлениях; шли репетиции, барон Крюднер дирижировал всем; мне не хотелось ехать: я думал, что чересчур будет жалко видеть. Однако ничего, вышло недурно, мичман Зеленый хоть куда: у него природный юмор, да он еще насмотрелся на лучших наших комических актеров. Смешон Лосев свахой. Всё это было чрезвычайно забавно, по оригинальности, самой неловкости актеров.

Our officers and those from the corvet staged Gogol's *Zhenit'ba* and *Tiazhba*. They performed them on the quarter-decks of the corvet. *Tiazhba* was performed on the way to Nagasaki! I knew about their preparations; there were rehearsals, and Baron Kreudener was directing them all. I didn't want to go; I thought it would just be too pitiful to watch. But on the contrary, it turned out not to be as pitiful as I feared. Midshipman Zelenyi couldn't be better: he has a natural humor, and he's seen enough of our best comic actors. Losev was funny as the matchmaker. It was all extraordinarily amusing, owing to its originality and the very clumsiness of the actors.<sup>100</sup>

Goncharov's skepticism was clearly overcome by the production, but his reluctance to attend what he expected to be a poor performance tells us something about his experience with the theater; even amidst the tedium of the ship's travel, he would rather have stayed in his room than see a disappointing rendition of Gogol's plays.

Although Goncharov did not see it performed while he was at sea, it is actually Gogol's *Revizor* that offers an almost identical template and prototype of the "parade of guests" at the beginning of *Oblomov*. There is a remarkably similar sequence of visitors in the play, in the pivotal Act IV.<sup>101</sup> After the entire town has come to believe that the minor clerk Khlestakov is a powerful government inspector, the leaders of numerous local institutions feel the need to offer him bribes so that he will overlook the farcical disorder of the town. There are exactly five entrances and exits made by these visitors as they seek to appease Khlestakov by greasing his palm. Part of the humor, of course, is the mistaken identity of Khlestakov, a common dramatic trope, but the comedy also builds as the same interaction is repeated with each visitor. As in *Oblomov*, by the second guest, the reader wonders not what will happen, but *how* it will happen; in the first case the money is dropped on the floor and Khlestakov asks if he may borrow it ("Знаете ли что? дайте их мне взаймы" ["You know what? Loan them to me"]), and by the final visitor he is boldly demanding one thousand rubles ("Взаймы рублей тысячу" ["Give me a loan of one thousand rubles"]).<sup>102</sup> Here again we see the mechanization of comedy, but also, as in *Oblomov*, the pattern of alternating conversation and introspection. The

<sup>100</sup> Ivan Goncharov, *Fregat "Pallada": Ocherki putestestviia v dvukh tomakh (The Frigate Pallas: Travel Notes in two Volumes)* (Leningrad: Nauka (Literaturnye pamiatniki), 1986), 290-91.

<sup>101</sup> Galya Diment suggests an affinity between the sequences of visitors in *Oblomov* and *Revizor* in a footnote, but she mentions this only in passing (41).

<sup>102</sup> Gogol' 4: 56, 61.

officials' visits are flanked by Khlestakov's monologues, and are often punctuated by his brief reflections on the encounter he has just experienced. Thinking that the townspeople are offering him loans out of the goodness of their hearts and thus completely missing their corrupt attempts to bribe him, Khlestakov will often utter a positive assessment of his recently departed guest, such as in the following case: "Почтмейстер, мне кажется, тоже очень хороший человек. По крайней мере, услужлив. Я люблю таких людей" ("The postmaster, it seems to me, is also a good person. He is, at least, obliging. I like people like that").<sup>103</sup>

There is even something of a repetition of the trope of repetition itself in the scenes following the officials' visits. Finding himself alone with the mayor's daughter, Khlestakov immediately begins to profess his love for her, kneeling and spouting all manner of romantic rhetoric: "Как бы я желал, сударыня, быть вашим платочком, чтобы обнимать вашу лилейную шейку" ("How I wish, madam, that I could be your kerchief, so that I could embrace your lily-white little neck").<sup>104</sup> When the mayor's wife enters the room and sends her daughter out, Khlestakov jumps up from his knees, and then falls on them again before her mother, proclaiming: "Нет, я влюблен в вас. Жизнь моя на волоске. Если вы не увенчаете постоянную любовь мою, то я недостоин земного существования. С пламенем в груди прошу руки вашей" ("No, I am in love with you. My life is hanging by a thread. If you do not return my constant love, then I am unworthy of earthly existence. With the flame of passion in my heart, I ask for your hand").<sup>105</sup> As soon as the daughter enters again, Khlestakov turns his attention back to her. Khlestakov's words and actions are clearly devoid of meaning, as he proclaims the same romantic nonsense to any woman who happens to be in the room. This entire series of exchanges, aside from illustrating the emptiness of mechanical repetition, presents yet another version of the sequence of suitors we have seen in Gogol's plays and in Goncharov's novel; the only difference is that Khlestakov himself is playing all of the roles.

Finally, we also see in *Revizor* the neoclassical *noms parlants* that we saw in Part I of *Oblomov*, as the cast of characters boasts such figures as Liapkin-Tiapkin ("Slipshod") and Poshlyopkina (from the Russian verb meaning "to spank or slap"). Gogol uses the same practice in naming the landowners in *Mertvye dushi*; a line can be drawn from Gogol's Sobakevich ("Dog") and Nozdryov ("Nostril") to Goncharov's Volkov, Sudbinsky and Penkin.<sup>106</sup> There are certainly elements of likeness in characterization, and Goncharov even explicitly highlights this in his novel by having Alekseev address Tarantiev as Sobakevich (145). To my mind, however, this similarity of characterization points to a more significant and pervasive similarity: that of novelistic structure itself, which, for both Gogol and Goncharov after him, incorporates elements of the dramatic form.

In *Oblomov*, we watch five guests appearing in rapid sequence to ask the eponymous character the same question. In *Mertvye dushi* we see Chichikov visiting five landowners to ask each of them the same question: would they be interested in selling

<sup>103</sup> Gogol' 4: 57.

<sup>104</sup> Gogol' 4: 70.

<sup>105</sup> Gogol' 4: 72.

<sup>106</sup> For instance, Krasnoshchekova reads the first five chapters of *Oblomov* as a recreation of the style of characterization found in *Mertvye dushi* (Krasnoshchekova 1970, 9-10).

him their dead souls? This invariable repetition creates the same dynamic we saw in *Oblomov*: the interest lies not in what will happen, but in how it will happen.<sup>107</sup> Diment has commented on this structural similarity, observing that the “parade of guests” might be considered an inversion of Chichikov’s famous visits to the landowners; in this case, instead of Oblomov traveling to their homes, the other characters simply come to him.<sup>108</sup> Moving beyond this observation, however, I would argue that the reason these two sequences of events are so markedly similar is because they are actually drawn from the same pattern: a *dramatic* one.

Scholarship on the generic elements of Gogol’s *Mertvye dushi* is both prolific and long-ranging. The picaresque, the lesser epic and the mock epic are just a few of the generic categories to which Gogol’s work has been assigned.<sup>109</sup> In spite of these sometimes conflicting opinions about the dominant genre of Gogol’s text, there is a decided critical consensus about its most central organizing motif: the road. Most notably, Donald Fanger applies Stendhal’s notion of the novel as “a mirror on the road” to Gogol’s text, arguing that the Russian novel embodies this definition better than any European text.<sup>110</sup> In light of the constantly repeating pattern of Chichikov’s interactions with the landowners, and in conjunction with the oft-noted attention to the interior space of these encounters, I would suggest that it is possible to think of the text not only as a mirror on the road but as a *comedy on the road*, one that extends through space and time, and yet stages the same exchange in every place that it goes. I do not posit this textual form as a genre with a defined historical and generic lineage, but rather as a description of what happens on this very singular occasion in Gogol’s text, as he incorporates one specific element of the dramatic form in his otherwise novelistic (and epic) text. While borrowing this pattern from neoclassical comedy, Gogol does not adopt the unities of time and space, and the dramatic does not override the novelistic and epic elements of the text; *Mertvye dushi* has swallowed several textual forms, but has not swallowed them whole.

It is just as if Gogol were composing a play, marked by the same repetitive patterns of movement and language of his comedies, with no concern for the cost of constructing the sets. Each act, then, takes place on a new estate, meticulously crafted by Gogol’s descriptive pen. There are a number of markedly dramatic moments in these encounters as well. To give just a few examples, when Chichikov asks Manilov if he will sell his dead souls, the landowner’s pipe falls out of his mouth, which remains agape for a ludicrous several minutes, recalling the mute scene in *Revizor*; after a long digression that fades off into ellipses in the middle of Chichikov’s encounter with Korobochka, the narrator feels the need to turn back to what he calls the *dramatis personae*: “Но, однако ж, обратимся к действующим лицам” (“But, anyway, let us return to our *dramatis*

<sup>107</sup> We might also note that the time spent on the road allows for the display of a clumsiness similar to Zakhar’s; Chichikov’s driver is just as adept at turning the carriage on its side and spilling his master into the mud as Zakhar is at dropping dishes and trays (Gogol’ 5: 39-41, 206-7).

<sup>108</sup> Diment 15.

<sup>109</sup> For a few twentieth-century examples of this scholarship, both of which offer an overview of scholarship past, see William Mills Todd, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 164-200; Donald Fanger, *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1979), 164-191.

<sup>110</sup> Fanger 169. Stendhal’s phrasing is “un miroir qu’on promène le long d’un chemin.”

personae”).<sup>111</sup> Similarly to the pattern of alternating dialogue and reflection in *Oblomov*, scenes of Chichikov on the road mulling over his successive interlocutors between visits punctuate these encounters with the landowners. Richard Freeborn has suggested that the visits to the landowners might be considered “one-act playlets,” which could be rearranged in any order with little detriment to the plot of the novel as a whole (the one exception being that the visit to Pliushkin must be the final stop).<sup>112</sup> It should be noted that the author of *Oblomov* was actually present at a staging of scenes from Gogol’s novel in March 1856, before he wrote the “parade of guests” episodes in his own novel.<sup>113</sup> Goncharov follows in Gogol’s footsteps, both in the creating the “parade of guests” and in featuring the comedy of Zakhar and Oblomov throughout the entirety of his novel. We can thus trace a line linking the instances of this dramatic structural pattern from eighteenth and nineteenth-century comedy (Fonvizin’s *Nedorosl’*, Gogol’s comedies) to the nineteenth-century novel (Gogol’s *Mertvye dushi*, Goncharov’s *Oblomov*).

Both Gogol and Goncharov address the conflation of generic modes in their essays. Gogol’s description of the genre of the “lesser epic” is often invoked in analysis of the generic components of *Mertvye dushi*, but in the same unpublished work, his *Uchebnaia kniga slovesnosti dlia russkogo iunoshestva* (*Textbook of Literature for Russian Youth*, likely written in the first half of the 1840s), Gogol makes some very illuminating comments about the genre of the novel:

Роман не есть эпопея. Его скорей можно назвать драмой. [...] Он летит, как драма, соединенный живым интересом самих лиц главного происшествия, в которое запутались действующие лица и которое кипящим ходом заставляет самые действующие лица развивать и обнаруживать сильней и быстро свои характеры, увеличивая увлеченье.

A novel is not an epic. It can more aptly be called a drama. [...] A novel] flies along like a drama, unified by the vivid interest of those dramatis personae involved in the main sequence of events, in which they have been entangled, and which, in its bubbling movement, makes these dramatis personae develop and reveal more strongly and quickly their characters, thereby increasing the fascination.<sup>114</sup>

Several points here are of great significance, from the direct statement of the affinity between the novelistic and dramatic form to Gogol’s use of the dramatic “deistvuiushchie litsa” (“dramatis personae”) rather than the novelistic “geroi” (“characters”). Moreover, Gogol’s description of the revelation of characters through their encounters with others

<sup>111</sup> “Манилов выронил тут же чубук с трубкою на пол и как разинул рот, так и остался с разинутым ртом в продолжение нескольких минут” (“Manilov dropped his mouthpiece and his pipe to the floor right then and there and opened his mouth wide; he stood there with his mouth gaping wide for several minutes”) (Gogol’ 5: 33, 48).

<sup>112</sup> Freeborn 91. Freeborn also refers to the visits as “dramatized episodes,” but he uses this term not to refer to a structural pattern, but rather in keeping with Wayne Booth’s classification of dramatized narration as marked by a dominance of dialogue over narrative. He later identifies the centrality of dialogue in this part of the novel as evidence of the dramatic form (114).

<sup>113</sup> Alekseev 62. The staging took place at the Petersburg Theatrical School.

<sup>114</sup> Gogol’ 8: 481-2.

applies equally to *Mertvye dushi* and *Oblomov*; in both cases the primary character is presented to the reader first and foremost through his interactions with those he visits, or those who visit him. Whether or not Gogol had his own *Mertvye dushi* in mind when writing this definition of the novel, his words are highly descriptive of his own text.

Goncharov picks up this thread from Gogol in writing his own novel a decade later. In describing his creative process in his later years, after all of his novels were published, Goncharov makes his own statements linking *Oblomov* to drama. Depicting himself as an artist in the essay “Luchshe pozdno chem nikogda” (“Better Late Than Never,” first published 1879), Goncharov explains his creative process. The quote is lengthy, but extremely illustrative of the novelist’s conception of the act of writing:

Рисуя, я редко знаю в ту минуту, что значит мой образ, портрет, характер: я только вижу его живым перед собою— и смотрю, верно ли я рисую, вижу его в действии с другими— следовательно, вижу сцены и рисую тут этих других, иногда далеко впереди, по плану романа, не предвидя еще вполне, как вместе свяжутся все пока разбросанные в голове части целого. Я спешу, чтоб не забыть, набрасывать сцены, характеры на листках, клочках— и иду вперед, как будто ощупью, пишу сначала вяло, неловко, скучно (как начало в *Обломове* и *Райском*), и мне самому бывает скучно писать, пока вдруг не хлынет свет и не осветит дороги, куда мне идти. У меня всегда есть один образ и вместе главный мотив: он-то и ведет меня вперед— и по дороге я нечаянно захватываю, что попадется под руку, то есть что близко относится к нему. Тогда я работаю живо, бодро, рука едва успевает писать, пока опять не упрусь в стену. Работа, между тем, идет в голове, лица не дают покоя, пристают, позируют в сценах, я слышу отрывки их разговоров— и мне казалось, прости господи, что я это не выдумываю, а что это все носится в воздухе около меня и мне только надо смотреть и вдумываться. Мне, например, прежде всего бросался в глаза ленивый образ *Обломова*— в себе и в других— и все ярче и ярче выступал передо мною.

Drawing, I rarely know in that moment what my image, my portrait, my character means: I only see it alive before me and watch whether I am drawing it correctly. I see it in action with others and, consequently, I see scenes and draw in these others as well. They are sometimes far ahead, according to the plan of the novel, and I cannot yet fully see how these parts of the whole, scattered in my head, will join together. I hurry so as not to forget, sketching scenes and characters on sheets or scraps of paper, and I make my way forward as if by feel, writing at first dully, awkwardly, boringly (like the beginning in *Oblomov* and *Raisky*) and I myself am sometimes bored by my writing until the light bursts through and illuminates for me the roads I should take. I always have one image, which is the main motif: this is what leads me forward—and along the way I absorb whatever my hand inadvertently chances upon, that is, whatever belongs closely to it. Then I work vivaciously, vigorously; my hand can hardly write fast enough, until I again come up against a brick wall. The work, in the meantime, is continuing in my head, the characters give me no peace, pester me, and pose in scenes. I hear fragments of their conversations—and it has seemed to me, may God forgive me, that I am not imagining this, but that it is all in the air

around me, and all I have to do is watch and think about it. For example, I was struck first of all by the lazy image of *Oblomov*—in myself and in others—and it rose brighter and brighter before me.<sup>115</sup>

Goncharov sees his characters in motion before him, he hears their conversations, and he affixes these to the page not as portraits, as he suggests, but rather as active dramas, full of movement and life. It is significant that he describes the characters he sees before him as “zhivye” (“living”) and “v deistvii” (“in motion”), for the “stseny” (“scenes”) he creates are full of dialogue and movement (if not on the part of Oblomov himself, then at least on the part of his visitors and the bumbling Zakhar). In fact, Goncharov even describes his writing process in terms of movement and a journey—a light leads him forward, and then he continues down this road, collecting episodes for his narrative along the way. Goncharov is recording dramas, and it is these dramas that become the building blocks of his novel.

Here again we see a writer of the 1850s, this time not a playwright, using drama as a backbone for creating the Russian novel. As writers of the mid-century turned to *Mertvye dushi* as a prototype of the Russian novel they were trying to create, then, we must recognize that it was not only their own texts that bore evidence of dramatic structure and patterning, but also the template from which they were working. To Gogol’s comedy on the road, they added their own dramatic novels. More than simply continuing Gogol’s line of comedy in the novel, however, they established their own dramatic novelistic aesthetic. This aesthetic would become the foundation for the celebrated nineteenth-century Russian novel, balancing elements of the dramatic form in sophisticated novelistic narratives, just as Goncharov balanced the overwhelmingly dramatic Part I of *Oblomov* with the more nuanced comedy of the relationship between Oblomov and Zakhar.

In closing, let us consider an epigrammatic moment. In October 1876, Goncharov wrote a letter to the playwright and journalist Pyotr Boborykin in response to a lecture he had recently given on the art of the theater. Decrying the general trend of young actors’ lack of *literary* dramatic education (as opposed to their ample training on the stage itself), Goncharov recalls a much brighter time, the era of such actors as Shchepkin and Mochalov. During this time, he explains, a different relationship existed between the worlds of literature and drama: “Здесь литература и театр подавали друг другу руки” (“Here literature and theater went hand in hand”).<sup>116</sup> With his ample use of dramatic structure and comic patterns of interaction in *Oblomov*, Goncharov could just as well have been talking about his own novel.

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<sup>115</sup> Goncharov 8: 70-71. In this essay Goncharov consistently places the names of his characters in italics.

<sup>116</sup> Goncharov 8: 482-3.

**Chapter 3: “The Vaudeville in Prose: Dostoevsky’s *Diadiushkin son (Uncle’s Dream)* and *Selo Stepanchikovo i ego obitateli (The Village of Stepanchikovo and its Inhabitants)*”**

When we think of the dramatic in Dostoevsky, we think first of Nastasia Filippovna’s scandalous outbursts or of Viacheslav Ivanov’s famous designation of Dostoevsky’s major works as novel-tragedies.<sup>117</sup> In these works Dostoevsky artfully blends elements of drama with his distinctive narrative voice, creating texts that exemplify the balance of genres found in the mature novel, which incorporates numerous textual forms and yet retains its identity as a novel. Some of Dostoevsky’s modest earlier works reveal his beginning experimentation with this technique and indicate that before he turned to tragedy, he drew upon comedy. These texts from the 1850s, while not as aesthetically successful as his full-length novels, show Dostoevsky’s first steps in using elements of drama in his prose. Dostoevsky’s heavy reliance upon drama in these works, compounded by his precarious position as a writer returning from prison and exile in Siberia, reflects the overall hesitancy of the novel during this period, between the masterful novelistic hybrids of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Gogol, and the revered tradition of the late nineteenth-century Russian novel.

Nowhere is this more evident than in his two “Siberian novellas,” *Diadiushkin son (Uncle’s Dream)* and *Selo Stepanchikovo i ego obitateli (The Village of Stepanchikovo and its Inhabitants)*, written just before Dostoevsky’s return from his prison term and exile in Siberia and published in 1859.<sup>118</sup> Anxious about reestablishing his name in the literary world after finally being granted permission to publish again, Dostoevsky pinned all of his hopes upon the two novellas.<sup>119</sup>

Like Turgenev and Goncharov, Dostoevsky was affected by issues of censorship; although the severe *tsenzurnyi terror* (“censorship terror”) was lightened in 1855, Dostoevsky felt the pressure of pleasing the administration all the more strongly, having been convicted of sedition for his involvement in the Petrashevsky Circle and stripped of his right to publish. The level of scrutiny to which Dostoevsky and his writings were subjected places him in a category of his own. For much of the time that other writers were struggling to find ways to survive during the *mrachnoe semiletie* (“the dark seven years,” 1848-1855), Dostoevsky was in a prison camp in Siberia, not yet able to fathom regaining his literary reputation. By 1855 he had been released from prison and was in

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<sup>117</sup> Viacheslav Ivanov first introduced this terminology in his 1911 essay “Dostoevskii i roman-tragediia” (“Dostoevsky and the Novel-Tragedy”). Viacheslav Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4 (Brussels: Foyer Oriental Chrétien, 1987), 401-444. Konstantin Mochul’skii later borrowed the term for his analysis of Dostoevskii’s novels. While Ivanov’s argument is largely concerned with the philosophical aspects of tragedy, Mochul’skii devotes more attention to the formal and textual aspects of the genre. Konstantin Mochul’skii, *Dostoevskii: zhizn’ i tvorchestvo* (Paris: YMCA, 1947).

<sup>118</sup> Joseph Frank provides a full treatment of Dostoevskii’s involvement with the Petrashevsky affair and his subsequent arrest, imprisonment, and exile. Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal (1850-1859)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

<sup>119</sup> Although I follow the English-language convention of referring to these two texts as novellas, Dostoevskii consistently thought of them and referred to them as novels, serious works of considerable length.

exile in Semipalatinsk, where he began thinking about writing again, but not without anxious consideration of the restrictions of the censors.<sup>120</sup>

Instead of turning to high drama as did Turgenev, or to classical comedy as did Goncharov, Dostoevsky made use of popular comical dramatic forms: vaudeville and *balagan*, the carnival puppet theater. While various elements of theatrical behavior, as defined by Elizabeth Burns, are certainly present in the Siberian novellas, of greater significance are the structural and textual elements that Dostoevsky incorporates from these dramatic forms—most specifically the construction of characters and the patterns of scenic action.<sup>121</sup>

### **From Comedy to the Comic Novel**

Numerous readers of Dostoevsky, including those as distinguished as Vladimir Nabokov, have puzzled over the writer's decision not to write plays, given the intense dramatism and theatricality of his novels.<sup>122</sup> While he never pursued a career as a playwright, Dostoevsky *did* write several plays in his early career, the historical dramas *Mariia Stiuart* (*Mary Stuart*) and *Boris Godunov* in 1841-42, and another play called

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<sup>120</sup> Dostoevskii was concerned with censorship throughout the 1840s. In his "confession," written during his imprisonment in the Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg, Dostoevskii wrote: "Целые роды искусства должны исчезнуть: сатира, трагедия уже не могут существовать. Уже не могут существовать при строгости нынешней цензуры такие писатели, как Грибоедов, Фонвизин и даже Пушкин. Сатира осмеивает порок, чаще всего--порок под личиною добродетели. Как может быть теперь хоть какое-нибудь осмеяние? Цензор во всем видит намек, злопоздризывает, нет ли тут какой личности, нет ли желчи, не намекает ли писатель на чье-либо лицо и на какой-нибудь порядок вещей... Да и можно ли писать одними светлыми красками? Каким образом светлая сторона картины будет видна без мрачной, может ли быть картина без света и тени вместе? О свете мы имеем понятие только потому, что есть тень" ("Entire forms of art will disappear: satire and tragedy can no longer exist. Such writers as Griboedov, Fonvizin, and even Pushkin can no longer exist under the strictness of today's censorship. Satire derides vice, and in particular the vice that is found under the mask of virtue. How can there possibly be any derision now? The censor sees a hint in everything, suspects—is some individual hidden there, is there not some gall there, does the writer not hint at some individual or at some order of things... And is it really possible to write only in bright colors? How will the bright side of the picture be visible without the dark? Can there be a picture without light and shadow together? We only have an understanding of light because there are shadows.") Cited in N.F. Bel'chikov, *Dostoevskii v protsesse Petrashevtsev* (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), 244. Here and elsewhere in the notes and text, unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

In point of fact, Dostoevskii was very fortunate to have Goncharov as the censor both for *Selo Stepanchikovo* and for his journal, *Vremia* (*Time*), founded by the writer and his brother; Goncharov, criticized by his contemporaries for taking part in the institution of censorship, was actually a strong advocate for the works of his fellow writers. He cut only one word from *Selo Stepanchikovo*. F.M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-1990), 2: 500.

<sup>121</sup> Here, as previously, I use the term "dramatic" to refer to specific strategies of constructing a text.

<sup>122</sup> Nabokov expresses this observation less than charitably: "he seems to have been chosen by the destiny of Russian letters to become Russia's greatest playwright, but he took the wrong turn and wrote novels." Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Russian Literature*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 104. Interestingly enough, Mochul'skii discusses Dostoevskii's own awareness of the dramatic nature of his novels, standing in such stark contrast to what he saw as more epic descriptive powers in his contemporaries Turgenev and Tolstoy; Dostoevskii, blaming his poor working conditions and constant financial constraints, considered his works inferior to those of the other two novelists (Mochul'skii 353-54.)



*Iankel' the Jew (Zhid Iankel')* in 1844.<sup>123</sup> After these early experiments with dramatic forms, however, Dostoevsky never again wrote for the stage; the closest he came to drama was in his composition of the Siberian novellas. Dostoevsky's letters to his brother about his inaugural works for his "second beginning" as a writer reveal the complex process of their composition. His first concern, evident in every letter, is the question of whether he will be allowed to publish again, and how soon. In spite of his fears, Dostoevsky remained hopeful; in one 1854 letter, he first wrote, "Ведь позволят же мне печатать лет через шесть, а может, и раньше" ("Surely they will let me publish in six years, and maybe sooner").<sup>124</sup> A few paragraphs later, he was already feeling more optimistic: "Но, ради бога [...] да наведайся у людей знающих, можно мне будет печатать и как об этом просить. Я попрошу года через два или три" ("But for God's sake [...] find out from those who know if I will be allowed to publish and how to request permission. I will ask in two or three years").<sup>125</sup> Finally, still in the same letter, Dostoevsky states his literary ambitions: "Теперь буду писать романы и драмы" ("Now I will write novels and dramas").<sup>126</sup> Dostoevsky's statement was more accurate than he could have realized, for he would merge these two textual forms in the Siberian novellas.

Confident in his ability to publish again, Dostoevsky began writing; he did not start with a novel, but with a comedy. He explains to Apollon Maikov in early 1856:

Я шутя начал комедию и шутя вызвал столько комической обстановки, столько комических лиц и так понравился мне мой герой, что я бросил форму комедии, несмотря на то, что она удавалась, собственно для удовольствия как можно дольше следить за приключениями моего нового героя и самому хохотать над ним. Этот герой мне несколько сродни. Короче, я пишу комический роман, но до сих пор все писал отдельные приключения, написал довольно, теперь все сшиваю в целое.

I started writing a comedy for fun and called up so many comic situations and comic individuals for fun, and I like my hero so much that I gave up the form of comedy, even though it was coming out very well, solely for the pleasure of following further the adventures of my hero and laughing at him myself. This hero is somewhat related to me. In short, I am writing a comic novel, but up until now I have only written individual adventures, but I have written enough, and now I am stitching them all together into a whole work.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>123</sup> The manuscripts of these works have not survived, but we do have some information about them, gleaned from letters and memoirs of the period. Mikhail Alekseev, who has treated this portion of Dostoevsky's oeuvre most fully, argues that Dostoevskii's choice of subject matter accurately reflects the major literary currents of the 1840s, romanticism and Gogolian early realism. M. P. Alekseev, "O dramaticheskikh opytakh Dostoevskogo" in *Tvorchestvo Dostoevskogo 1821-1881-1921*, ed. L. P. Grossman (Odessa: Vseukrainskoe Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1921), 48-55.

<sup>124</sup> This was Dostoevskii's first letter to his brother following his release from prison; it was written on January 30-February 22, 1854. F.M. Dostoevskii 28:1: 172.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid 173.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid 174.

<sup>127</sup> This letter was written January 18, 1856. Ibid 209.

It was this text, with its comic scenes stitched together, that formed the foundation for both of the Siberian novellas, *Diadiushkin son* and *Selo Stepanchikovo*.<sup>128</sup> Dostoevsky's phrasing introduces a hybrid generic form, in which the pure comedy of the character can be fully explored, but without the limitations, temporal or spatial, of drama. Comedy provides the subject matter and the character, but the novel allows for the full exploration of the character, in a world beyond the unities of time, space, and action. The tension between these two forms is everywhere felt in the novellas, as they strain between the tidy world of comedy and a world that does not necessarily fit into these contours, as is often found in the novel.

Dostoevsky's early letters to his brother suggest that he had yet another practical reason for abandoning the form of the drama in favor of prose. As early as 1845, Dostoevsky was worried about the time required to compose a play and see it to the stage: "Писать драмы--ну, брат. На это нужны годы трудов и спокойствия, по крайней мере для меня [...] 2, 3 года, и посмотрим, а теперь подождем!" ("To write dramas—really, brother! You need years of work and peace for that, or at least I do [...] in two or three years, we'll see, but for now, we'll wait!").<sup>129</sup> Due to his situation, there was every reason to believe that Dostoevsky would be subject to far harsher standards of censorship. Furthermore, this would likely have been a harrowing process for him, given that plays had to go through two levels of censorship, one for publication, and another for performance. While Turgenev and Tolstoy had the resources to wait through this lengthy process before being paid for their work, Dostoevsky, always on the verge of financial insolvency, simply did not. In fact, in an 1888 letter to Konstantin Stanislavsky, the director of the Moscow Art Theater (MKhT), Dostoevsky's widow wrote that she was very pleased that *Selo Stepanchikovo* had finally been staged, since he had initially planned to write it as a drama, but could not afford to wait for it to pass through the censorship to receive pay for it.<sup>130</sup> Unable to make use of the dramatic form as such, Dostoevsky incorporates it into the novel, the famously omnivorous prose genre. While Dostoevsky likely turned to popular forms of drama for practical reasons, there were aesthetic consequences. The critic Tatiana Rodina evocatively describes the relationship between the two genres in Dostoevsky's work: "У него проза поглощает драму, но драма преобразует прозу изнутри, определяя её синтетическую, мутантную природу" ("His prose swallows drama, but drama transforms his prose from within, defining its synthetic, mutant nature").<sup>131</sup> In this, as in other cases, Dostoevsky's generic hybridization indeed alters both textual forms.

Vaudeville and *balagan* may well have been appealing to Dostoevsky in light of his desire to regain the right to publish. Many vaudeville writers found refuge from the censorship in the light-hearted plot lines of this form, and Dostoevsky follows in their

<sup>128</sup> The editors of Dostoevskii's *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, having examined the surviving letters and manuscripts relating to this textual evolution, provide compelling evidence for the genesis of both novellas in this comic novel, begun as a dramatic work (Dostoevskii 2: 510; 3: 498).

<sup>129</sup> Dostoevskii 28:1: 108.

<sup>130</sup> Konstantin Stanislavskii relates this exchange with Anna Grigorievna Dostoevskaia in his memoir, *Moia zhizn' v iskusstve* (*My Life in Art*, 1936). Konstantin Stanislavskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1954), 1: 138.

<sup>131</sup> T.M. Rodina, *Dostoevskii: Povestvovanie i drama* (Moscow: Nauka, 1984), 48.

footsteps.<sup>132</sup> However, by transforming these dramatic genres into prose, Dostoevsky is able to expand upon their characters and breathe new life into them. In an 1859 letter to his brother, Dostoevsky explained that it was the creation of the two main characters in *Selo Stepanchikovo*, Foma Fomich Opiskin and Colonel Rostanev, of which he was most proud: “Еще будет много, что высказать [...] но в нем [в романе] есть два огромных типических характера, создаваемых и записываемых пять лет, обделанных безукоризненно (по моему мнению),--характеров вполне русских и плохо до сих пор указанных русской литературой” (“There will still be more to say [...] but in it [the novel] there are two immense character types, which I spent five years creating and writing, who are impeccably finished (in my opinion)—characters who are completely Russian and poorly shown in Russian literature up until now”).<sup>133</sup> One of these characters is new not to drama but to new to *prose*. I would argue that Dostoevsky grants him a fuller and more developed novelistic incarnation than he had ever received in drama, due in large part to the open expanses of time and space in the novel.

Unfortunately for Dostoevsky, the road to publication was an arduous one. Both writer Alexei Pleshcheev and publisher Andrei Kraevsky disliked *Diadiushkin son*, which was eventually published in the new and decidedly lesser journal *Russkoe slovo* (*Russian Word*). *Selo Stepanchikovo* fared still worse; Mikhail Katkov rejected it outright and passed it along to Nikolai Nekrasov at *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*), but he made such a paltry offer to Dostoevsky that it had to be refused.<sup>134</sup> Finally, Dostoevsky's brother Mikhail sent the manuscript to Kraevsky at *Otechestvennye Zapiski* (*Notes of the Fatherland*), and he agreed to publish it in spite of his reservations.<sup>135</sup>

To Dostoevsky's great chagrin, the Siberian novellas met with complete critical failure; there was almost no response to their publication. It was not until 1862 that either of them received any critical treatment, and even then it was not positive.<sup>136</sup> A number of hypotheses have been suggested to explain the lack of contemporary response to the two texts. Some have argued that in the charged political climate of 1859, just two years before the abolition of serfdom, the depiction of serfdom as a cheerful institution on Russian estates found no sympathy with readers.<sup>137</sup> And many scholars attribute the lack of readership to a corresponding lack of aesthetic value in the novellas, which are certainly not among Dostoevsky's strongest works.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>132</sup> See Alexander Tselebrovski, *The History of Russian Vaudeville from 1800-1850* (PhD Dissertation, Louisiana State University, 2003), 178.

<sup>133</sup> This letter was written on May 9, 1859. *Dostoevskii* 28:1: 326.

<sup>134</sup> *Dostoevskii* 2: 499.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid* 499.

<sup>136</sup> The critic Nikolai Mikhailovskii, writing for the journal *Otechestvennye Zapiski*, charged *Selo Stepanchikovo* with “strained melodrama.” N.K. Mikhailovskii, *Literaturno-kriticheskie stat'i* (Moscow: Gosudarstvenno izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1957), 208.

<sup>137</sup> Kirpotin 518. Joseph Frank concurs that the novellas did not engage with contemporary issues enough to win a readership (Frank 1983, 266-67). More recently, Ignat Avsey has picked up this argument and extended it. He notes that history repeats itself for the 1917 staging of *Selo Stepanchikovo* at the MKhT Theater, where the performance was quickly forgotten in light of the events of the Revolution. Ignat Avsey, “*The Village of Stepanchikovo* or ‘There’s a Man with No Clothes on!’” in *Dostoevsky's Polyphonic Talent*, ed. Joe. E. Barnhart (New York: University Press of America, 2005), 153-170.

<sup>138</sup> See, for instance, V.A. Tunimanov, *Tvorchestvo Dostoevskogo 1854-1862* (*Dostoevsky's Creative Work 1854-1862*) (Leningrad: Nauka, 1980), 65.

Despite their lack of critical and aesthetic success, Dostoevsky's "vaudevilles in prose" raise a number of important questions: What does Dostoevsky gain by employing the dramatic form, and what does he gain by infusing elements of drama into his novellas? What does the form of the novel offer to him, and, most importantly, what happens to dramatic characters when they are placed within a novelistic text? These considerations, in the context of the relationship between the forms of drama and the novel, are the focus of this chapter.

### **Dostoevsky v teatral'nykh kreslakh (Dostoevsky's Theater Experience)**

Before answering these questions, it is essential to consider Dostoevsky's personal experience with the theater, and specifically with the popular genres that we see in the Siberian novellas. Abram Gozenpud, who treats Dostoevsky's engagement with theatrical performances most fully, makes much of the writer's childhood visits to fairground theaters in Moscow, where he saw *balagan* shows, pantomimes, jester routines, and the famous Petrushka puppet act.<sup>139</sup> His love for these popular performances continued throughout his career, as evidenced by a much later piece he wrote for *Dnevnik pisatel'ia (Diary of a Writer)*, in which he argued that *balagan* plays were worthy of staging at the Imperial Alexandrinsky Theater.<sup>140</sup>

In the 1830s and 40s, Dostoevsky was just as enamored of romantic drama and Italian opera as his contemporaries, but he also enjoyed performances of a much lighter genre, the vaudeville. From his editorial comments of the 1860s in *Vremia (Time)*, the journal that he founded with his brother, we can be certain of his familiarity with such vaudevilles as Pyotr Karatygin's *Vozdushnye zamki (Castles in the Air, 1818)* and A.I.V.'s *Muzh v dver', a zhena v Tver' (When the Husband's Away, The Wife Will Play, 1845)*, the latter of which figures prominently in *Diadiushkin son*.<sup>141</sup> Dr. A.E. Risenkampf, who shared an apartment with Dostoevsky in 1843, later wrote of the writer's love of the theater and of his favorite actors, including Alexander Martynov, who played primarily vaudeville roles in the 1840s.<sup>142</sup>

What were the general characteristics of these two genres of popular drama? Vaudeville originated in France as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century; the name came from the ballads that described the Val de Vire revolt in Normandy. These ballads were called *Vaux de Vire* (Voices of Vire). In the following centuries, the name became "vaudeville," and came to describe a specific type of musical theater. Over time, the genre became apolitical and focused instead on love plots between stock characters and featured sung couplets by individual actors and ensemble songs at the finale. The vaudeville did not make its debut in Russia until 1812, but in the next four decades, it became one of the most dominant genres on the Russian stage, with 200-300 new vaudevilles being written and performed every year.<sup>143</sup> The popularity of the genre may be explained in part by the benefits to all involved. Vaudevilles were not hard to write, they used stock sets and

<sup>139</sup> A. Gozenpud, *Dostoevskii i muzykal'no-teatral'noe iskusstvo* (Leningrad: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1981), 5.

<sup>140</sup> Dostoevskii 2: 511.

<sup>141</sup> Gozenpud 40.

<sup>142</sup> A.E. Risenkampf, "Vospominaniia o F.M. Dostoevskom," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* t.86 (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), 328-329.

<sup>143</sup> For a detailed history of the form of vaudeville in Russia, see Tselebrovski.

characters, and thus they did not demand much from the theaters or the actors staging them. The couplets were mostly sung to existing tunes, and they often provided mocking commentary on contemporary events; they were not at all meant to serve as forces for social or political change, but the subject matter of their couplets offered an easy way for writers to keep their vaudevilles fresh and relevant.<sup>144</sup> Although vaudevilles were intended to give their audiences a laugh about contemporary issues, the world of their performances was tightly circumscribed in one-dimensional plots, typically love triangles or rivalries, unrecognized kinship, and fights over inheritances.

The *balagan* featured wooden puppets and was also a perennial favorite in the nineteenth century. The name is derived from the Persian word for balcony, *balahana*, on which the performances were staged. Over time, the Russian word *balagan* began to refer not only to the performance, but also to the booth-like structures that were erected for the puppet shows.<sup>145</sup> These performances became an integral part of outdoor celebrations and festivals; the booths were built next to other entertainments such as roller coasters and carousels. The puppet shows often featured figures from the Italian commedia dell'arte, though adapted into Russian form. Pierrot, a later French addition to the Italian tradition, became the beloved Russian Petrushka, popular throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. These performances regularly included grotesque characterizations of the human body, such as dismemberment, overeating, corpses coming back to life, and other types of violence. Since the “actors” were mere wooden dolls, their grotesque feats were more comic than horrific.

We can be certain of Dostoevsky's exposure to both types of popular drama in the years just before he wrote the Siberian novellas, while he was still a prisoner in Omsk. In *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma* (*Notes from the House of the Dead*, 1860), Dostoevsky's work based on his experiences in hard labor camp, the narrator, Gorianchikov, describes an evening of theatrical productions put on by the convicts, the same performance which Dostoevsky saw himself. The evening began with a makeshift orchestra playing the Kamarinskaya, a folk tune, complete with homemade balalaikas. This was followed by two short theatrical pieces, Pyotr Grigoriev's vaudeville *Filatka i Miroshka--soperniki* (*Filatka and Miroshka: Rivals*, 1831) and the farce *Kedril'—obzhor* (*Kedril' The Glutton*). The evening concluded with a spirited pantomime set to music, featuring two characters, Mel'nik and Mel'nichikha (The Miller and His Wife).<sup>146</sup> Although we cannot treat *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma* as an autobiography, it is noteworthy that these performances made up the whole of Dostoevsky's theatrical experience in the years leading up to his composition of the Siberian novellas.<sup>147</sup>

*Filatka i Miroshka* was a vaudeville with which Dostoevsky was already acquainted; in his description of the performance in *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma*, the narrator argues that the convict playing the lead role is far better than the actors who

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid 25.

<sup>145</sup> Catriona Kelly, *Petrushka: The Russian Carnival Puppet Theater* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), xiii.

<sup>146</sup> Dostoevskii 4: 116-130. Subsequent references to Dostoevskii's literary works will appear in the body text, with the volume followed by the page number.

<sup>147</sup> Joseph Frank has deduced that, in contrast to the temporal arrangement of *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma*, the prison theatricals actually took place in November 1851, during the second year of Dostoevsky's prison term. Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation—1860-1865* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 222.

undertook the performance in Moscow and St. Petersburg (4: 124.).<sup>148</sup> Gorianchikov likewise reminds the reader that this very vaudeville was mentioned in Gogol's *Nevskii prospekt* (*Nevsky Prospect*, 1835) (4: 118).<sup>149</sup> With a simple love plot, suggested by the rivals mentioned in the title, the vaudeville's charm lies in the spirit of its acting.

The provenance of the second theatrical piece, *Kedril'—obzhor*, is more complex. Gorianchikov describes his vain attempts to discover the origin of the farce, concluding only that the convicts took it not from any publication, but rather from a copy passed on to them by a citizen of the town, someone who had taken part in an amateur soldiers' production of the farce some years before (4: 118-19).<sup>150</sup> Gorianchikov describes the performance as belonging to the corpus of Don Juan plays, with the name Kedril' possibly issuing from Pedrillo, the tutor of Don Juan. There is certainly something of the *balagan* grotesque in the farce, as the frightened Kedril' almost unconsciously eats the entire chicken he was to give to his master. Several scholars have found a link between this farce and the puppet theater of Petrushka, and indeed, the figure of the gluttonous servant, issuing from the commedia dell'arte character Gaer, was a regular part of the Petrushka repertoire.<sup>151</sup>

Gorianchikov describes the pantomime set to music in great detail and points out that its origins are well-known—it derives from Gogol's tale *Noch' pered Rozhdestvom* (*The Night Before Christmas*, 1831) (4: 128-29). Gogol's text centers upon a very theatrical sequence of guests, who are hidden, one by one, in coal sacks, to keep the secret of their presence from the other guests who call. The prison pantomime is closely related, featuring a miller's wife who is visited by a sequence of suitors, all of whom must be hidden in the house before her husband returns.<sup>152</sup> The main action of the pantomime seems to derive from the vaudeville or farce, but there is something of the grotesque seen in the *balagan* here as well, when a corpse comes back to life at the

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<sup>148</sup> Dostoevskii finds the convict actor's performance less contrived and more natural than that of the professional actors. The vaudeville, written by the actor and playwright P.G. Grigoriev, was first staged in 1831 and remained a part of the Petersburg and Moscow repertoires throughout the next three decades. *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra v semi tomakh*, ed. N.G. Zograf (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1978), vol. 4: 408.

<sup>149</sup> Gogol', who made no secret of his equal distaste for vaudeville and melodrama, associates the drama with the middling strivings of the class to which his main hero belongs. N.V. Gogol', *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh*, (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1977), 3: 30.

<sup>150</sup> He further postulates that the piece originated in the serf theaters so common on nineteenth-century estates, and that the acting techniques must have been passed down to these convicts through the years; he makes a passionate argument for the importance of such *narodnyi teatr* (people's theater), which he sees as the beginning of Russia's dramatic arts.

<sup>151</sup> Kelly xii.

<sup>152</sup> Dostoevskii experimented with such themes and patterns in two 1848 feuilletons, "Chuzhaia zhenia (Ulichnaia stsenia)" ["Another Man's Wife (A Street Scene)"] and "Revnivyi muzh (Proisshstvie neobyknovennoe)" ["A Jealous Husband (An Uncommon Occurrence)"]. In 1860 these two works were shortened and combined into one tale, "Chuzhaia zhenia i muzh pod krovat'iu (Proisshstvie neobyknovennoe)" ["Another Man's Wife and the Husband under the Bed (An Uncommon Occurrence)"]. These feuilletons likewise feature hiding suitors and streams of guests, like Gogol's tale and the prison pantomime. Victor Terras treats the tales in his work *The Young Dostoevsky (1846-1849): A Critical Study* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 46-47. The critical consensus is that the two feuilletons were written hastily for money and are not worthy of serious attention; nonetheless, they might be seen as forerunners to his more serious engagement with this hybridization of forms in the Siberian novellas in the 1850s.

conclusion of the performance. This thin line between the life and death was a frequent feature of the Petrushka repertoire.<sup>153</sup>

The musical portion of the evening, including most prominently the Kamarinskaya, is also relevant to the Siberian novellas; one of the many performances in *Selo Stepanchikovo* is the peasant Falaley's costumed dance to the song. This song, described in detail by Gorianchikov, was fresh in Dostoevsky's mind as he wrote his novellas, as were the rest of the theatricals. As he drew upon them as building blocks for both works, he would also transform them and make them his own. One key distinction of both the vaudeville and the *balagan* is that they were not typically read as texts, but rather seen performed; by transposing them not only in written form, but in the format of prose, Dostoevsky heightens the tension between text and performance in his novellas.

### *Diadiushkin son*

*Diadiushkin son* is a tale that shows the dramatic on multiple levels, from its intermittent present tense and many planes of performance to its conscious and explicit discussion of its own theatrical elements. And yet, in terms of plot and characterization, it is also very simple; Mochulsky aptly calls it "a vaudeville hastily remade into a tale."<sup>154</sup> *Diadiushkin son* is shaped around its curious main character, the uncle, who is known as Prince K. A wealthy and eccentric hermit, the uncle arrives completely by accident in the small town of Mordasov and sets the plot into motion, as nearly everyone begins competing for his attention and, of course, for his money. It is in the creation of this character that Dostoevsky does something distinctive: the character of the uncle is constructed directly from the figures of the vaudeville and *balagan* and made to walk the floorboards of the novel.

<sup>153</sup> Kelly 96. Gozenpud has also suggested that it is quite possible that this pantomime derived from the *balagan*, citing Alexander Benois' recollection that the figure of Pierrot in *balagan* shows was sometimes referred to as Mel'nik, the name of one of the main characters in the prison pantomime (Gozenpud 5).

<sup>154</sup> "Это—водевиль, наскоро переделанный в повесть" (Mochul'skii 141). Valerii Kirpotin calls *Diadiushkin son* a "слабый рассказ, без глубоких идей" ("a weak story, without deep ideas"). V.Ia. Kirpotin, *F.M. Dostoevskii: Tvorcheskii put' (1821-1859)* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1960), 547.

In fact, in 1873 Dostoevsky received a letter from a Moscow student asking for permission to rework *Diadiushkin son* into a comedy. The writer's response was less than encouraging: "15 лет я не перечитывал мою повесть "Дядюшкин сон". Теперь же, перечитав, нахожу ее плохую. Я написал ее тогда в Сибири, в первый раз после каторги, единственно с целью опять начать литературное поприще, и ужасно опасаясь цензуры (как к бывшему ссыльному). А потому невольно написал вещичку голубиноного незлобия и замечательной невинности. Еще водевильчик из нее бы можно сделать, но для комедии -- мало содержания, даже в фигуре князя, -- единственной серьезной фигуре во всей повести." ("I haven't reread my tale *Diadiushkin son* in fifteen years. Now, having read it again, I find it bad. I wrote it in Siberia, right after I was released from prison, with the sole goal of beginning my literary profession again, and fearing the censorship terribly (as a former convict). And therefore I involuntarily wrote a thing of the most angelic meekness and remarkable innocence. You might still be able to make a little vaudeville out of it, but for a comedy there is not enough substance—even in the figure of the prince, who is the only serious figure in the entire work.") (Cited in *Dostoevskii: Materialy i issledovaniia*, Vol. 5 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1983), 190-191). Dostoevskii requested that if the novella were to be staged as a drama, his name not be placed on the bill. In spite of Dostoevskii's reluctance, *Diadiushkin son* was staged very successfully on several occasions, including at Moscow's Maliy Theater in 1878 and at MKhT (Moscow Art Theater) in 1929, with Olga Knipper-Chekhova in the role of Maria Moskaleva.

The prince's strangeness is concentrated in his physical appearance; the narrator tells us that he is “весь составлен из каких-то кусочков” (“made up entirely out of some kind of pieces”) (2: 300). There is something not quite human about him, which becomes clearer when the considerable repertoire of his personal toilette is revealed. Dostoevsky is not so much introducing his character as putting him together, piece by piece:

Он носил парик, усы, бакенбарды и даже эспаньолку — всё, до последнего волоска, накладное и великолепного черного цвета; белился и румянился ежедневно. Уверяли, что он как-то расправлял пружинками морщины на своем лице и что эти пружины были, каким-то особенным образом, скрыты в его волосах. Уверяли еще, что он носит корсет, потому что лишился где-то ребра, неловко выскочив из окошка, во время одного своего любовного похождения, в Италии. Он хромал на левую ногу; утверждали, что эта нога поддельная, а что настоящую сломали ему, при каком-то другом походе, в Париже, зато приставили новую, какую-то особенную, пробочную. Впрочем, мало ли чего не расскажут? Но верно было, однако же, то, что правый глаз его был стеклянный, хотя и очень искусно подделанный. Зубы тоже были из композиции. Целые дни он умывался разными патентованными водами, душился и помадился.

He wore a wig, a mustache, sideburns, and even an imperial beard—everything, down to the last hair, was false and of a magnificent black color. He powdered and rouged himself every day. They said that he smoothed the wrinkles on his face by means of little springs, and that these springs that were hidden in some peculiar manner under his hair. They also said that he wore a corset because he had lost a rib somewhere, having jumped clumsily out of a window during one of his love affairs in Italy. He limped on his left leg; they maintained that this leg was artificial, as his real leg had been broken during some other adventure in Paris, and so they put in a new one, a special one made of cork. But there is no end to the tales people will tell. But it was true, in fact, that his right eye was made of glass, although it was very artfully made. His teeth were also false. For entire days he bathed himself in various patented waters, perfumed himself and pomaded his hair. (2: 300-301)

The details of the prince's appearance highlight the artificiality of his body. From the springs that smooth out his wrinkles to his cork leg and glass eye, the prince is part human and part doll—a grotesque pairing of organic and artificial elements. Mozgliakov, the prince's nephew, calls him a “полупокойник” (“a half-corpse”), citing his false parts as evidence that he is a dead body someone forgot to bury (2: 307). The narrator himself confirms this opinion, calling Prince K. “какой-то мертвец на пружинах” (“some kind of corpse on springs”) (2: 310). This description recalls the common trope of the dead man coming back to life in the *balagan*; the fact that Prince K. is made partially of wood only strengthens this connection.

The links between Prince K. and the *balagan* are numerous. In her study of Petrushka, one of the most beloved figures of the fairground puppet theater, Catriona Kelly identifies the grotesque body as one of the hallmarks of the form—Petrushka can



take his body apart and put it back together as he pleases, just as Dostoevsky's Prince K. can remove his false leg, eye, hair, and teeth.<sup>155</sup> Both Petrushka and Prince K. provide caricatures of the human body, exaggerated in their features and held together only by artificial means, and both are linked to the Dionysian ritual of dismemberment. To give just one example from *Diadiushkin son*, the hapless prince fears that he will be torn to pieces after the domineering Marya Alexandrovna publicly identifies all of his false body parts; his cry of horror is “меня растерзают!” (“they will tear me to pieces!”) (2: 389). He is, in a sense, torn to pieces, as Marya Alexandrovna dissects his body into individual artificial components.<sup>156</sup>

Several real-life prototypes have been suggested for Prince K. Moisei Al'tman, among others, points out a similarity between the prince's excessive personal toilette and that of Fyodor Fyodorovich Kokoshkin, the director of the Moscow theaters; the likeness is striking, but it is unclear whether Dostoevsky would have been privy to the details of Kokoshkin's personal habits.<sup>157</sup> Lidiia Lotman and Georgy Fridlender suggest an alternate provenance for the character, an anecdote about a Parisian prince who takes great pains to appear young, which was published in the journal *Moskvitianin* (*The Muscovite*) in 1853.<sup>158</sup> Lotman and Fridlender point out that Dostoevsky had access to such journals while he was in Siberia through his friendship with the Baron Vrangeli, but there is no conclusive evidence that Dostoevsky did indeed read this piece.

These links to real individuals remain tentative, but we can more conclusively link the character of Prince K. to a *genre*—vaudeville. Lighthearted in both form and content, and often dealing with young lovers and humorous domestic situations, the vaudeville featured as its signature sung *kuplety* (couplets) set to popular tunes and finale ensemble songs. While many Russian vaudevilles in the early decades of the nineteenth century were simply translations of French works, Russian playwrights such as Fyodor Koni and Pyotr Karatygin eventually made the form their own.<sup>159</sup> Curiously enough, the uncle was a major figure in such vaudevilles, just as Prince K. is in *Diadiushkin son*. The complete repertoire of the Imperial theaters for the years 1826-1845 in the authoritative *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra* (*History of the Russian Dramatic Theater*) lists no less than eight vaudevilles with uncles featured in the titles, ranging from Dmitri Lensky's *Diadiushkina taina* (*Uncle's Secret*) and Alexander Pisarev's *Diadia naprokat* (*Uncle for Hire*) to the anonymously authored *Diadiushka* (*Uncle*) and *Diadia svat, ili*

<sup>155</sup> Kelly 95.

<sup>156</sup> This scene is not only related to the *balagan* tradition, but also possibly to the vaudeville tradition; Gozenpud suggests that the tearing apart of the prince is linked to several of the actor Vasili Samoilov's roles, in which he transformed from a young man into an old man (Gozenpud, 42). Bakhtin devotes some attention to the carnivalesque nature of this scene in his *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*), and Joseph Frank, among other scholars, has also identified this aspect of the text as related to the grotesque body of the *balagan*. M. M. Bakhtin, *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1979), 187-89. Frank 1983, 273. See also Rodina 93; Dostoevskii 2: 511-12.

<sup>157</sup> M.S. Al'tman, *Dostoevskii: Po vekham imen* (*Dostoevsky's Milestone Names*) (Saratov: Saratov University Press, 1975), 32-35.

<sup>158</sup> L.M. Lotman and G.M. Fridlender, “Istochnik povesti Dostoevskogo ‘Diadiushkin son’,” in *Iz istorii russkikh literaturnykh otnoshenii XVIII-XX vekov*, ed. S.V. Kastorskii (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk, 1959), 370-74.

<sup>159</sup> Simon Karlinsky details these shifts in his classic work on Russian drama, *Russian Drama from its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 232-277.

*odin v mesto drugogo (Uncle the Matchmaker, or One in the Place of Another)*.<sup>160</sup> The listing of titles from the years 1846-1861 shows still more uncles in vaudevilles, including Pyotr Karatygin's *Diadiushka na trekh nogakh, ili Khoteli solgat', a skazali pravdu (Uncle on Three Legs, or They Wanted to Lie, But They Told the Truth)*.<sup>161</sup> *Diadiushkin son*, which Dostoevsky initially conceived of as a dramatic work, fits right into this list of vaudevilles centering on the figure of the eccentric uncle, whose function is usually to help the young lovers overcome the obstacles to their marriage or to provide a large inheritance.<sup>162</sup> We can be certain of Dostoevsky's familiarity with such works through his acquaintance with the theater before his arrest, and also because he cites a couplet from one of them in his journal *Vremia (Time)* following his release from prison and exile. The song, "По Гороховой я шёл" ("I Walked Along Gorokhovaia Street"), is sung by the landowner Kubarev in Pyotr Grigoriev's *Komediia s diadiushkoi (Comedy with an Uncle)*.<sup>163</sup>

<sup>160</sup> *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra v semi tomakh*, ed. N.G. Zograf (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1978), vol. 3: 248-249, 266. The other vaudevilles named for uncles are as follows: *Diadiushka-boltushka, ili Dver' v kapital'noi stene (Uncle the Chatterbox, or the Door to the Main Wall)*, *Diadia Paxom (Uncle the Baptist)*, *Diadia-sopernik (Uncle the Rival)*, and *Komediia s diadiuskoi, ili Noveye portrety s natury (Comedy with an Uncle, or New Portraits from Nature)*.

<sup>161</sup> *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra v semi tomakh*, ed. N.G. Zograf (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1978), vol. 4: 319-320, 339. The other vaudevilles named for uncles are as follows: *Diadiushka-boltushka, ili Dver' v kapital'noi stene (Uncle the Chatterbox, or the Door in the Main Wall)*, *Diadiushka Fedor Ivanovich Rusakov (Uncle Fedor Ivanovich Rusakov)*, *Diadiushka khlopotun (Uncle the Busybody)*, *Diadiushkin frak i tetushkin kapot (Uncle's Suit and Aunt's Coat)*, *Diadiushkiny zatei, ili Zhenit'ba na skoruiu ruku (Uncle's Undertakings, or a Rough-and-Ready Marriage)*, *Diadia v khlopotakh, ili Kto na kom zhenat (Uncle the Busybody, or Who is Married to Whom)*, and *Komediia s diadiuskoi, ili Noveye portrety s natury (Comedy with an Uncle, or New Portraits from Nature)*.

<sup>162</sup> Here is one such example, taken from a vaudeville by Aleksei Pisarev (a well-known figure in Russian vaudeville): *Khlopotun, ili delo mastera boitsia (The Busybody, or Know-How Gets the Job Done Best, 1824)*:

Репейкин. Деликатность не имение; богаты ли вы?

Лионский. У моего дяди тысяча душ, а я наследник.

Репейкин. Прекрасно! Каких лет ваш дядюшка?

Лионский. Ему лет семьдесят.

Репейкин. Все равно, что умер. У вас тысяча душ... Что ж за вздор вы мне наговорили.

Лионский. Но дядя мой жив еще.

Репейкин. Говорят вам, что он умер. Разве он не должен умереть? И не ему чета умирают.

(Repeikin: Tactfulness is not an estate. Are you rich or not?)

Lionskii: My uncle has a thousand souls [serfs], and I am the heir.

Repeikin: Wonderful! How old is your uncle?

Lionskii: He is about 70.

Repeikin: Well, it's all the same that he died. You have a thousand souls... what kind of nonsense did you tell me?

Lionskii: But my uncle is still alive.

Repeikin: They say that he's dead. Shouldn't he die anyway? His betters happen to die, too.)

Aleksei Pisarev, *Khlopotun, ili delo mastera boitsia in Russkii vodevil' (Russian Vaudeville)* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1959), 112.

This function of the uncle also has its place in Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin (Eugene Onegin, 1825-32)*, as the eponymous hero is called to the bedside of his dying uncle, setting the plot in motion.

I am very grateful to Anna Muza for calling my attention to these passages in Pisarev's vaudeville and in *Evgenii Onegin*.

<sup>163</sup> Cited in Gozenpud 40. Pyotr Grigoriev was also the author of *Filatka i Miroshka—soperniki (Filatka and Miroshka—Rivals)*, the vaudeville Dostoevskii saw performed while in prison.

What happens to this vaudeville uncle when he is transplanted into prose? One key possibility for the interaction between genres is parody. Yuri Tynianov builds his seminal study of parody (“Dostoevskii i Gogol’: K teorii parodii” (“Dostoevsky and Gogol: Toward a Theory of Parody,” 1921)) on the works of Dostoevsky.<sup>164</sup> Tynianov does not discuss *Diadiushkin son* at length, but I believe there is a place for it in his schema. A central part of his argument is that parody often results in a reversal of a textual form: a comedy becomes a tragedy, and vice versa. In *Diadiushkin son*, we see the same kind of reversal, but on the level of the character. Whereas the vaudeville uncle is frequently the triumphant matchmaker, in *Diadiushkin son* he is actually the *victim* of others’ matchmaking, as everyone in the village of Mordasov is trying to gain access to his fortune by offering their daughters to him in marriage; Dostoevsky turns this well-known character upside down. The vaudeville uncle not only secures romantic happiness, but also financial security. Instead of resolving all conflicts, Prince K. resolves nothing for the people of Mordasov. His inheritance goes to his legitimate nephew, an already high-ranking individual, and Marya Alexandrovna comes into a fortune on her own, through her daughter’s marriage to a Governor-General. Prince K. performs an entirely different function here, that of the intruder (similar to the role of Rudin) into the insular provincial town, populated by the matron with an absent husband, the young and beautiful daughter, and a young tutor or teacher. Instead of interacting with the works of one specific author, Dostoevsky here is parodying an entire *genre*. The parody is also evident on a larger scale, in terms of the worldview of the text. Vaudeville was known for light-heartedly engaging with contemporary social and political issues, and, in contrast, *Diadiushkin son* exists inside a peaceful provincial bubble, which many scholars cite as the reason for its critical failure. Whether Dostoevsky intended the parody of vaudeville as an aesthetic statement or not, this may well be the greatest achievement of his otherwise modest novella.

There are many other elements in *Diadiushkin son* that seem to issue from vaudeville, not least of which is the musical aspect of the text. Zina, Marya Alexandrovna’s daughter, sings a French romance several times as part of her forced courtship with the elderly Prince K. It is not only this song, but its repetition, which is akin to the musical structure of the vaudeville, in which individuals sing a song that reveals their character.<sup>165</sup> In this case Zina identifies herself with the love plot of the text, caught between her mother’s demand that she marry the prince and her love for the impoverished and ailing schoolteacher Vasya.<sup>166</sup> This uneven treatment of aspects of vaudeville, in which some are parodied and some are adopted into the textual structure, creates a true generic hybrid, in which one genre simultaneously borrows from and undermines another.

The text’s engagement with the dramatic, however, is made yet more complex by the constant explicit references to vaudevilles, playwrighting, and performance; this vaudeville in prose is very self-conscious about its dramatic underpinnings. During Prince K.’s first visit to Marya Alexandrovna’s home in Mordasov, the lady of the house

<sup>164</sup> Iurii Tynianov, “Dostoevskii i Gogol’ (k teorii parodii) in *Arkhaisty i novatory* (Leningrad: Priboi, 1929; reprint, Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1967), 412-55 (page references are to reprint edition).

<sup>165</sup> Tselebrovski 83-84.

<sup>166</sup> Kirpotin argues that the characters in *Diadiushkin son* and the construction of their relationships are referential of the comic vaudeville (Kirpotin 512, 514).

flatters his wit: “С таким талантом! Но вы бы могли писать, князь! Вы бы могли повторить Фонвизина, Грибоедова, Гоголя!” (“With such talent! You could be a writer, prince! You could repeat Fonvizin, Griboedov, Gogol!”) (2: 313). Recalling the debates surrounding drama of the mid-nineteenth century, we cannot overlook the fact that Marya Alexandrovna has launched us directly into the discourse of the national Russian theater. There is a note of humor and sarcasm in the blurting out of all three of these names at once, as they alone form the national Russian dramatic tradition. In light of the high esteem in which Fonvizin, Griboedov, and Gogol are held, the prince’s response is all the more humorous: “Ну да, ну да! [...] я могу пов-то-рить... и, знаете, я был необыкновенно остроумен в прежнее время. Я даже для сцены во-де-виль написал... Там было несколько вос-хи-ти-тельных куплетов! Впрочем, его никогда не играли...” (“Well, yes, well, yes! [...] I can re-peat...and you know, I was extraordinarily witty in earlier days. I even wrote a vaude-ville for the stage...It had several de-light-ful couplets! But it was never staged...”) (2: 313). Prince K. has moved the discussion away from high-brow theater to popular forms of entertainment, showing Dostoevsky’s inclusion of characters from both types of drama, for there is certainly something of Khlestakov’s self-aggrandizement in the Prince’s claims to dramatic mastery.<sup>167</sup>

In spite of the fact that he never attained glory as a vaudeville writer, the prince’s statements throughout the text reveal that vaudeville remains his immediate frame of reference. On several occasions he mentions a popular vaudeville, *Muzh v dver’, a zhena v Tver’* (*When the Husband’s Away, The Wife Will Play*), which was staged at the Alexandrinsky Theater in 1845 (2: 319). This vaudeville is also a point of reference for the inhabitants of Mordasov, who inform the Prince that it was performed in their town last year (2: 376). These repetitive references draw readers into their orbit; the more this particular vaudeville is mentioned, the more marked is the text’s resemblance to a work of this genre.

The dramatic textual elements of *Diadiushkin son* are also very evident on a narrative level. One of the most marked examples of this is found at the beginning of chapter three. After two chapters narrated in past tense, suddenly the characters and the reader are thrust into present tense, just before the first salon scene:

Десять часов утра. Мы в доме Марьи Александровны, на Большой улице, в той самой комнате, которую хозяйка, в торжественных случаях, называет своим салоном. У Марьи Александровны есть тоже и будуар. В этом салоне порядочно выкрашены полы и недурны выписные обои. В мебели, довольно неуклюжей, преобладает красный цвет. Есть камин, над камином зеркало, перед зеркалом бронзовые часы с каким-то амуром, весьма дурного вкуса.

Ten o’clock in the morning. We are in the home of Marya Alexandrovna, on Grand Street, in that very room which the lady of the house, on festive occasions, calls her salon. Marya Alexandrovna also has a boudoir. In this salon the floors are rather well polished and the wallpaper is not unpleasant. Among the

<sup>167</sup> Khlestakov also claims to have written vaudevilles: “Я ведь тоже разные водевильчики...” (“I myself also [wrote] some little vaudevilles...”). Nikolai Gogol’, *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh* (*Collected Works in Seven Volumes*), ed. S.I. Mashinskii and M.B. Khrapchenko (Moscow, Khudozhestvennaia literature, 1976-78), 4: 43.

somewhat awkward furniture, the color red predominates. There is a fireplace, and above the fireplace, a mirror. Above the mirror is a bronze clock with some kind of Cupid, in entirely poor taste. (2: 303)

As in the stage directions of a play, the reader is first apprised here of the time and space, and then treated to an extended description of that space: its contours, its furniture, its décor. The cheap Cupid figurine above the clock recalls the one at the Maison Vauquer in the opening pages of Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, another novel that uses the dramatic form both as metaphor and as structuring device, and one with which Dostoevsky was certainly familiar.<sup>168</sup> Following the basic setting of the scene, we find, as is often the case in stage directions, a great deal of attention devoted to the dress and positioning of the characters. Here is one such example:

В эту минуту она стоит в стороне, у рояля, и перебирает пальчиками календарь. Это одна из тех женщин, которые производят всеобщее восторженное изумление, когда являются в обществе. Она хороша до невозможности: росту высокого, брюнетка, с чудными, почти совершенно черными глазами, стройная, с могучею, дивною грудью.

At this moment she is standing to the side by the piano, turning the calendar pages with her fingers. She is one of those women who create a general rapturous amazement when they appear in society. She is beautiful to the point of impossibility: a tall brunette with marvelous, almost completely black eyes, slender, with a prominent and well-developed bosom. (2: 304)

The remainder of the chapter consists largely of lengthy dialogues and monologues. This dynamic may remind us of the textual construction of Turgenev's *Rudin*, and indeed, George Steiner has argued that many of Dostoevsky's works were composed in accordance with what Henry James called "the principle of the scenario," in which dialogue dominates and narrative voice is at a minimum; this designation is often bestowed upon Turgenev's novels.<sup>169</sup> Dostoevsky's text, however, goes beyond Turgenev's in its inclusion of the present tense to complement the dialogue and stage directions of the novella. The immediacy of the present tense serves to "stage" the text, transposing drama into prose, and the conflict between these two forms is foregrounded.

After the shift back to past tense in chapter three of *Diadiushkin son*, the second salon scene is narrated in the present tense, but the following chapter reverts to the past tense. Joseph Frank, among other scholars, has viewed these abrupt shifts between past and present tense as a remnant of the dramatic work that Dostoevsky initially began composing; indeed, the gradual shift back into past tense shows the trouble Dostoevsky had, in his own words, "stitching together" the disparate parts of his novella, those issuing from an earlier dramatic text and those intended to form his final prose text.<sup>170</sup> It

<sup>168</sup> Honore de Balzac, *Le Père Goriot* (Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1856), 6. Peter Brooks discusses the link between Balzac's novel and melodrama in his seminal work *The Melodramatic Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, reprint 1995), 128-152.

<sup>169</sup> George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism* (New York: Knopf, 1959), 141. Percy Lubbock updates James' term and defines it more rigorously in his classic work *The Craft of Fiction* (New York: Viking Press, 1957), 69-71.

<sup>170</sup> Frank 1983, 269-270.

is not insignificant that Dostoevsky left these traces of his writing process in the final text. This tension between the dramatic present and the novelistic past suggests that neither form is entirely sufficient for Dostoevsky's purposes and that he is striving to reach a synthesis not only in terms of characterization but also on the temporal plane.

Even after Dostoevsky returns to the prosaic past tense, *Diadiushkin son* still bears more dramatic markers. Characters' monologues and dialogues continue to dominate the text, and chapter breaks are generally marked with entrances and exits of characters, making them very similar to scene breaks in dramatic works. This type of transition occurs no less than five times in *Diadiushkin son*, as the characters participating in the scene, along with the reader, turn their attention to the new figure entering the stage. Dostoevsky also frequently uses the device of eavesdropping, which we saw on many occasions in *Rudin*. Characters often learn of the schemes of others through listening at a keyhole, and they betray some consciousness of the dramatic subtext of their spying. When the spinster Nastasia Petrovna urges Mozgliakov to eavesdrop upon Marya Alexandrovna's plan to marry Zina off to Prince K., she advertises the proceedings as dramatic ones: "А вот поймете, как нагнетесь и слушаете. Комедия, верно, сейчас начнется" ("You will understand when you bend down and listen. The comedy is probably starting now") (2: 340). Vladimir Tunimanov, noting the same pattern, has suggested that the tightly enclosed interior space in which much of the novella takes place is specifically theatrical, designed for the eavesdropping that carries so much of the plot.<sup>171</sup> It is a strong marker of the dramatic that even though Dostoevsky could have used the wide spatial expanse of the novel and all of the means of communication it allows, he chose to build a small domestic stage-like set, in which conditions are perfect for eavesdropping. As we saw in *Rudin*, characters who eavesdrop actually create a play-within-a-play, as they stage a spectator to the events unfolding who is actually on the stage himself.<sup>172</sup>

And, of course, we could hardly expect this Dostoevsky novella to be free of the scandals that are featured in so many of his works. There are multiple ensemble scenes in which the plans of scheming characters are revealed to all, in addition to several instances of characters melodramatically falling at each other's feet.<sup>173</sup> Like Nastasia Petrovna, many other characters have an awareness of the theatricality of the scenes unfolding before them. After word of Marya Alexandrovna's desperate plan to marry Zina off to Prince K. has spread throughout the town, all of the ladies arrive at her house, not wanting to miss the scene sure to unfold: "Некоторые из дам приехали с решительным намерением быть свидетельницами какого-нибудь необыкновенного скандала и

<sup>171</sup> Tunimanov 24.

<sup>172</sup> Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, trans. John Halliday (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 230. Notably, eavesdropping is also a hallmark of the *svetskaia povest* ("society tale"), a genre popular in the 1830s that is considered one of the forerunners to the Russian novel. The *svetskaia povest* is also considered a highly dramatic form of prose, making use of numerous dramatic devices. For more detail on the dramatic elements of the *svetskaia povest*, see Victoria Somoff, *From Authority to Author: Russian Prose on the Eve of the Novel, 1820-1850* (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2007) and Helena Gosילו, "Stage and Page: Drama's Incursion Into Russian Fiction of the 1830s," *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Bydgoszczy* 18.7 (1985): 91-113; Elizabeth C. Shepard, "The Society Tale and the Innovative Argument in Russian Prose Fiction of the 1830s," *Russian Literature* X (1981): 111-62.

<sup>173</sup> Mochul'skii identifies elements of melodrama, sentimental melodrama, and farce in these scenes (Mochul'skii 141-42).

очень бы рассердились, если б пришлось разъехаться, не видав его” (“Some of the ladies arrived, with the firm intention of being witnesses to some extraordinary scandal, and they would have been very angry had they had to leave without seeing it”) (2: 370). These women are aligned with the reader, who also does not want to miss the scene about to unfold, and in this sense a stage is created on two levels: within the text itself, as the ladies crowd in to be spectators, and in the relationship between the reader and the text. “Stsena” (“scene”), “komediia” (“comedy”), and “denouement” are some of the most repeated words in the text, speaking again to the textual awareness of a dramatic framework and Dostoevsky’s experimentation with varying levels of dramatic engagement.

Although she is eventually the victim of the theatrical tendency of the text, no one is more aware of its dramatic possibilities than Marya Alexandrovna herself. She spends almost the entirety of the novella orchestrating scenes designed to bend others to her will. She presents her plotting to her daughter Zina merely as a means for her to acquire the resources she needs to care for her ailing beau, she creates a scene of domestic bliss to trick the prince into proposing to Zina, she twists this marriage into a romantic opportunity for Zina’s smitten suitor Mozgliakov, and she brings her disgraced husband out of exile in the country to present a picture of a respectable family for Prince K. After Zina eavesdrops on Marya Alexandrovna’s conversation with Mozgliakov, she berates her mother for her directorial machinations in no uncertain terms: “Послушайте, клянусь вам, что если вы еще будете меня так мучить и назначать мне разные низкие роли в этой низкой комедии, то я брошу всё и покончу всё разом” (“Listen, I swear to you that if you keep torturing me and assigning me various base roles in this base comedy, I will give up everything and end it all at once”) (2: 356). Marya Alexandrovna almost succeeds in keeping these unwitting actors in her sway throughout the entire text.<sup>174</sup>

In addition to Marya Alexandrovna’s role as director, several scholars have identified the narrative voice in the text with the Chorus in Greek drama; the same connection can be made to the townspeople, who express their disapproval of Zina’s marriage to the Prince en masse at the end of the novella.<sup>175</sup> In a thematic echoing of their structural function in the text, this Chorus of townspeople actually claims that they have come to discuss the staging of a theatrical:

Mais, ma charmante [...] ведь надобно же, непременно надобно когда-нибудь кончить все наши сборы с этим театром. Тем более, мой ангел [...] что у вас теперь этот милый князь. Ведь вы знаете, в Духанове, у прежних помещиков, был театр. Мы уж справлялись и знаем, что там где-то складены все эти старинные декорации, занавес и даже костюмы. [...] Теперь мы нарочно заговорим о театре, вы нам поможете, и князь велит отослать к нам весь этот старый хлам. А то — кому здесь прикажете сделать что-нибудь похожее на декорацию? А главное, мы и князя-то хотим завлечь в наш

<sup>174</sup> Vladimir Tunimanov describes Marya Alexandrovna as a director, and the remaining characters as mere marionettes in her hands, taking their places in the scenes she creates, complete with rehearsals before the main event (Tunimanov 17-18). It is not insignificant that the characters are described by Tunimanov as wooden dolls, such as we see in *balagan*.

<sup>175</sup> Tunimanov 19; Frank 1983, 269-70; L.P. Grossman, “Dostoevskii—khudozhnik,” in *Tvorchestvo F.M. Dostoevskogo*, ed. N.L. Stepanov (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1959), 344.

театр. Он непременно должен подписаться: ведь это для бедных. Может быть, даже и роль возьмет, — он же такой милый, согласный.

Mais, ma charmant [...] we must, we really must complete our arrangements for the theatrical somehow. What's more, my angel [...] is that now we have this kind prince. For you know that at Dukhanovo the previous landowners had a theater. We already asked and found out that tucked away somewhere are the old sets, the curtain, and even the costumes. [...] Now we will make a special point of talking about it, you will help us, and the prince will order all of the old rubbish sent over to us. For who could we ask here to make something resembling sets? But the main thing is, we want to get the prince involved in our theatrical. He definitely must subscribe; it's for the benefit of the poor. Maybe he will even take a role—he is so kind and agreeable. (2: 369-70)

The theatrical these ladies propose to stage is meant to serve as a deflection from the theatrical they have actually come to *observe*: the scandal that is sure to break loose at Marya Alexandrovna's when her scheming is revealed. The layering of the dramatic function with dramatic subject matter (as these ladies serve as spectators and at the same time propose to stage another drama) is further evidence of Dostoevsky's play with self-referentiality.

While vaudeville and *balagan* are the most prominent dramatic forms in *Diadiushkin son*, the text also addresses more serious drama. Shakespeare is mentioned by the characters no less than thirty times, and Marya Alexandrovna uses his name as a shorthand for the youthful romanticism of Zina and her beau. Aside from the almost constant references to Shakespeare, there are a number of affinities between *Diadiushkin son* and one of the most prominent Russian comedies of the nineteenth century, Gogol's *Revizor* (*The Government Inspector*, 1836). The prince, who claims that he personally knows Pushkin, Beethoven and Lord Byron, cannot but remind the reader of Gogol's famous impostor, Khlestakov.<sup>176</sup>

On both a thematic and structural level, *Revizor* is present from the beginning to the end of *Diadiushkin son*. In the opening pages, the reader learns that the reason for Marya Alexandrovna's husband's exile in the country was the wrath of a visiting government inspector. No Russian reader could miss this reference, and Dostoevsky's foregrounding of a work which he evokes adds another layer of dramatic self-awareness to the text. The scandalous denouement of *Diadiushkin son* brings us not one but *two* mute scenes, following the pattern of *Revizor*. These scenes follow major confessions by Marya Alexandrovna and Zina, and are referred to by the narrator and other characters as "stsena" (2: 379, 386). Grossman draws a parallel between Marya Alexandrovna's failure to marry Zina to the Prince and the failure of Gogol's mayor to marry his daughter to Khlestakov; he refers to this trope in *Diadiushkin son* and in Dostoevsky's later works as "razviazka *Revizora*" ("the denouement of *The Government Inspector*").<sup>177</sup>

Finally, in the last pages of the novella, *Revizor* makes another appearance, as the narrator explains that Mozgliakov is not the wealthy prince's nephew after all, and he

<sup>176</sup> Valerii Kirpotin is one of many scholars who have drawn this comparison (Kirpotin 511).

<sup>177</sup> Grossman 345.



must flee the town when the real nephew arrives to sort out his uncle's affairs. The resemblance to the arrival of the government inspector in Gogol's play is uncanny:

На другой день, рано утром, в город въехал один посетитель. Об этом посетителе мигом заговорил весь Мордасов, но заговорил как-то таинственно, шепотом, выглядывая на него из всех щелей и окон, когда он проехал по Большой улице к губернатору [...] Гость был довольно известный князь Щепетилов, родственник покойнику, человек еще почти молодой, лет тридцати пяти, в полковничьих эполетах и в аксельбантах. Всех чиновников пробрал какой-то необыкновенный страх от этих аксельбантов.

The next day, early in the morning, a visitor arrived in the town. Instantly everyone in the town of Mordasov was talking about this visitor, but they were talking somehow secretly, in a whisper, looking out at him from every crevice and window as he drove down Grand Street to see the governor [...] The guest was the fairly well-known prince Shchepetilov, a relative of the late Prince K., a man still almost young, about thirty-five years old, with the epaulettes of a colonel and aglets. All of the town's officials were chilled by some extraordinary fear at the sight of those aglets. (2: 395-96)

Dostoevsky takes his tale beyond the mute scene that ends *Revizor*, however, providing some closure to the situation and a righting of all that has been turned upside down by the scheming characters: “Мозгляков же немедленно и постыдно ступешался перед настоящим, не самозванным племянником и исчез — неизвестно куда” (“Mozgliakov immediately and shamefully effaced himself before the real and not impostor nephew and disappeared—no one knows where”) (2: 396).

It should come as no surprise, then, that it was this particular text, and the character of Prince K., that brought out Dostoevsky's performative side. His friend Baron Vrangeli' recalls the writer pacing back and forth with glee, reciting the speeches of *Diadiushkin son* while he was composing the text.<sup>178</sup> Many years after he wrote the novella, Dostoevsky's wife Anna Grigorievna recalls him playing the part of the old prince for the children, sometimes for hours on end, a performance she did not appreciate, since it highlighted his increasing age.<sup>179</sup> Dostoevsky's impromptu theatricals

<sup>178</sup> A.E. Vrangeli', *Vospominaniia o F.M. Dostoevskom v Sibiri (Reminiscences of F.M. Dostoevsky in Siberia)* in *F.M. Dostoevskii v vospominaniakh sovremennikov (Reminiscences of F.M. Dostoevsky by His Contemporaries)*, ed. K. Tiunkin, (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990) 1: 357.

<sup>179</sup> “Я бывала очень недовольна, когда Федор Михайлович принимал на себя роль ‘молодящегося старичка’. Он мог целыми часами говорить словами и мыслями своего героя, старого князя из ‘Дядюшкиного сна.’ Выказывал он чрезвычайно оригинальные и неожиданные мысли, говорил весело и талантливо, но меня эти рассказы в тоне молодящегося, но никуда не годного старичка всегда коробили, и я переводила разговор на что-либо другое.” (“I was very upset when Fedor Mikhailovich took on the role of the ‘old man trying to look young.’ For hours at a time he could speak the words and thoughts of his hero, the old prince from *Diadiushkin son*. He would express extremely original and unexpected thoughts; he spoke happily and with talent, but these tales in the tone of the old man growing young but remaining worthless always grated upon me, and I changed the conversation to a different topic.”) A.G. Dostoevskaiia, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1971), 88.

suggest an important aspect of his text and his character: part of a deeply dramatic aesthetic, they were written to be performed.

*Diadiushkin son* displays an intriguing interweaving of comedic traditions within its pages, offering an amalgamation of vaudeville, *balagan*, Gogolian stage comedy, and a novelistic text (most prominently, in the first-person narrator who guides the reader through most of the events). Nonetheless, the figure of the old prince, a melding of the wooden dolls of the puppet theater and the eccentric uncle that figures so prominently in vaudeville, would likely have been more at home on the stage than in the pages of a novel. While certainly not among Dostoevsky's most successful works, *Diadiushkin son* does offer an example of the role of popular dramatic forms for the novel of the 1850s, and it allows us an intimate look at the kinds of works that Dostoevsky in particular had in mind as he was attempting to make his literary comeback.

### *Selo Stepanchikovo i ego obitateli*

The other text that Dostoevsky composed in 1859, *Selo Stepanchikovo i ego obitateli* (*The Village of Stepanchikovo and its Inhabitants*), is quite different in scope and in dramatic strategy, but it also illustrates a creative appropriation of popular theatrical forms—in this case, Dostoevsky focuses on the figure of the jester. We recall from Dostoevsky's letter to his brother that it was precisely the area of characterization in which Dostoevsky took the most pride in his novel *Selo Stepanchikovo*.<sup>180</sup> One of these characters may be new to the world of Russian prose, as Dostoevsky boasted, but he is certainly not new in the world of drama. This text allows us to see the possibilities and shortcomings of a dramatic character when he is placed in prose. As was the case in *Diadiushkin son*, the main dramatic figure in *Selo Stepanchikovo* is not quite at home in the novel, and the strength of the work lies in its parodic nature.

The central character in the novella, Foma Fomich Opiskin, is introduced as a “shut,” a jester, who for many years performed for the entertainment of his elderly and ailing benefactor. In her study of the Russian carnival puppet theater, Catriona Kelly points out that among the common names for jesters and fools are “Foma” and “Fomka-shut.”<sup>181</sup> The use of the term “shut,” even at its first appearance in the text, is already polyvalent—there is a literal sense in which Foma is a performer, and a metaphorical sense in which he makes this performative tendency a part of his larger persona, even long after his benefactor has died and he has taken up residence in the Rostanev household. The narrator informs us: “а между тем тот же Фома Фомич, еще будучи шутом, разыгрывал совершенно другую роль на дамской половине генеральского дома” (“But meanwhile this same Foma Fomich, still remaining a fool, played a completely different role in the women's wing of the general's house”) (3: 8). Playing the jester has prepared him to play a number of other roles, including the manipulative tyrant who makes all of the other characters live in fear of his wrath. The complexity of the character lies only in his ability to shift from one stage to another, so to speak, from jester to despot.

Whether playing the fool or playing the ruler, Opiskin commands attention just the same. This aspect of his image, and the introduction of the figure of the “shut” into a

<sup>180</sup> Significantly, Dostoevskii does refer to the text as a novel (“roman”). Dostoevskii 28:1: 326.

<sup>181</sup> Kelly 128.

prose work, affects the shape of the text and its chronotope. In his essay “Formy vremeni i khronotopa v romane” (“Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel,” 1937-38) Bakhtin discusses the specific function of the figures of the rogue, the jester, and the fool (“plut, shut, i durak”) in prose texts. He writes:

И вот здесь-то маски шута и дурака, конечно различным образом трансформированные, и приходят романисту на помощь. Маски эти не выдуманные, имеющие глубочайшие народные корни, связанные с народом освященными привилегиями непричастности жизни самого шута и неприкосновенности шутовского слова, связанные с хронотопом народной площади и с театральными подмостками.

And it is here that the masks of the jester and the fool, transformed, of course, in a distinctive manner, come to the aid of the novelist. These masks are not invented, but have the deepest popular roots, related to the people by means of the consecrated privileges of not being privy to the life of the jester himself, related to the chronotope of the popular square and to the theater stage.<sup>182</sup>

The very figure of the jester, then, in the character of Opiskin, brings the chronotope of performance into Dostoevsky’s text, where it has far-reaching effects from the beginning to the end of the novella. The interactions of the characters always take place in a space akin to a stage, with spectators, performers, and multiple eavesdroppers in the wings. In fact, these scenes are so common in Dostoevsky’s works that they are frequently referred to as “conclave scenes,” chaotic ensemble scenes that feature one or more scandalous revelations or conflicts.<sup>183</sup> Picking up on this performative dynamic, the critic Tunimanov aptly calls *Selo Stepanchikovo* a “бесконечный кошмарный спектакль” (“endless nightmarish play”) in which Opiskin serves as both the director and the main actor.<sup>184</sup>

*Selo Stepanchikovo* is indeed a text arranged around a series of performances; each scene has its performers and its spectators, and each scene ends in scandal. “Sumatokha” (“turmoil”) is one of the most frequently used words in the text, and fainting occurs regularly. Opiskin is the director of most of these scenes, whether he is subjecting the servants to public French lessons (which they invariably fail), demanding that stories be told, or judging Rostanev’s son Iliusha on his recitation of a poem. Opiskin even creates scenes out of performances that have already transpired; when he catches the servant boy Falaley dancing the Kamarinskaya, he drags him into the drawing room not for an encore, but to shame him for engaging in what he considers an immoral cultural practice. Falaley is not allowed to dance, but is used to create a scene of public

<sup>182</sup> M.M. Bakhtin, *Literaturno-kriticheskie stat’i* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1986), 196-97. In his book on Dostoevsky Bakhtin describes *Selo Stepanchikovo* as suffused with carnivalization, and explains the ridiculousness of each character, overdrawn into dramatic caricatures. His argument for carnivalization in *Selo Stepanchikovo* rests upon the notion of a world turned upside down, a world in which the fool Opiskin is the despot of an entire estate; the carnivalesque tone is linked to the dramatic in that the other characters are just as absurd as Opiskin, and all of them equally overdrawn and theatrical (Bakhtin 1979, 189-90).

<sup>183</sup> Grossman 344.

<sup>184</sup> Tunimanov 35-36. Tunimanov further notes that the beginning of the novella is much like a play, with external information about the characters and space in which the action takes place provided for the reader.

humiliation by Opiskin (3: 59).<sup>185</sup> After he has finished berating Falaley, Opiskin turns to the servant Gavrila, whom he forces to recite a French lesson. Opiskin is uncomfortable with anyone else holding the spotlight, and thus he offers this French lesson as an alternate form of entertainment to Falaley's dance: "Хочу и я вас потешить спектаклем, Павел Семеныч" ("I want to amuse you with a play, Pavel Semyonich") (3: 74). Opiskin specifically uses the word for "play" ("spektakl") that refers not to a written dramatic text, but to a performance. This word choice highlights a central tension in the text: Dostoevsky is drawing from *performed* traditions, as opposed to written ones, and there are some elements which simply do not translate from the stage to the page.

*Selo Stepanchikovo* allows us to pose several important questions: what happens to the character of the jester when he is taken out of the world of the drama and placed upon the stage of the novel? What does Dostoevsky gain by bringing this figure in, and in such a prominent role? One key answer is the growth and expansion of the character beyond his caricature-like state in drama. Opiskin is granted an individuality and humanization, in spite of his tyranny, in Dostoevsky's text. Indeed, Opiskin seems to be a predecessor to some of Dostoevsky's later characters, those who are indignant at the world because of their great suffering.<sup>186</sup> There is even some awareness of this possibility among Opiskin's fellow characters; the narrator, for instance, is quick to excuse Opiskin's insufferable behavior because of his psychological suffering from having to act as a jester for so many years in order to earn his keep:

Я слышал, что он прежде был чем-то вроде шута: может быть, это его унизило, оскорбило, сразило?.. Понимаете: человек благородный... сознание...а тут роль шута!.. И вот он стал недоверчив ко всему человечеству и... и, может быть, если примирить его с человечеством... то есть с людьми, то, может быть, из него выйдет натура особенная... может быть, даже очень замечательная, и... и... и ведь есть же что-нибудь в этом человеке?

I heard that he was something like a jester before: maybe that insulted him, injured him, overwhelmed him? Understand: you take a noble and conscious man...and give him the role of a jester! And so he became distrustful of all humankind and...and maybe if you reconcile him with humankind...that is, with people, then, maybe, he will develop into an uncommon person...maybe even a very remarkable person, and...and...maybe there is something in this man after all? (3: 29-30)<sup>187</sup>

<sup>185</sup> As we recall, the Kamarinskaia was of some significance to Dostoevskii; he had heard the music performed while he was in prison camp. He describes the performance in his semi-autobiographical work *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma* (4: 127-128). Valerii Kirpotin, furthermore, associates Falalei's wardrobe with a vaudeville costume (Kirpotin 545).

<sup>186</sup> Opiskin is part a long line of such characters in Dostoevsky's work. He often features characters who are performing and yet simultaneously deeply suffering; we can think, for instance, of Marmeladov in *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (*Crime and Punishment*, 1866) or the Underground Man in *Zapiski iz podpol'ia* (*Notes from Underground*, 1864).

<sup>187</sup> It is worth noting here that the roots of the words "unizhennyye i oskorblennyye" ("insulted and injured"), used in another title of Dostoevsky's, are present in the narrator's musings about Opiskin.

Almost from the beginning of the novel, then, there is a possibility that Opiskin has numerous masks—not just that of the jester, but perhaps also of the downtrodden genius. This polyvalence creates a level of complexity in his character that is not seen in his prototypes in drama or in the *balagan*.

The role of the jester in the prose text is further complicated by Opiskin's understudy, another character who also plays the fool. Before Opiskin appears, we meet Ezhevikin, the father of the beautiful governess Nastia, whom the good Colonel Rostanov wants to marry.<sup>188</sup> After Ezhevikin's introductory comedic speech, the narrator informs us: "Раздался смех. Понятно было, что старик играл роль какого-то добровольного шута" ("Laughter rang out. It was understood that the old man was voluntarily playing the role of some kind of jester") (3: 51). Ezhevikin is aware of the role he is playing himself, and he takes up a discussion of it with the narrator: "Вы, благодетель, верно меня за барского шута принимаете? [...] Коли я шут, так и другой кто-нибудь тут! А вы меня уважайте: я еще не такой подлец, как вы думаете. Оно, впрочем, пожалуй, и шут. [...] Фортуна заела, благодетель, оттого я и шут" ("You, benefactor, probably take me for the jester of the estate? [...] Even if I am a jester, I'm not the only one here! And you should respect me: I am not such a scoundrel as you think, although it is true that I am a jester. [...] Fortune has betrayed me, benefactor, and that is why I am a jester") (3: 51). Joseph Frank refers to Ezhevikin as a "quasi-double" of Opiskin, displaying the same pride and sense of being insulted by fate.<sup>189</sup> In fact, Ezhevikin's daughter later reveals that he is playing the fool in order to flatter Opiskin, a former fool himself: "А разве вы не видите, что делает для меня мой отец! Он шутит перед ними вертится! Его принимают именно потому, что он успел подольститься к Фоме Фомичу. А так как Фома Фомич сам был шутит, так вот ему и лестно, что и у него теперь есть шуты" ("But is it really possible that you do not see what my father is doing for me? He's playing the fool before them! They accept him here precisely because he has managed to worm himself into Foma Fomich's good graces. And just as Foma Fomich himself was a jester, so it flatters him that now he has his own jesters") (3: 80). These two characters create an ongoing cycle for this dramatic figure in the text, as the role of the jester is passed from one character to another. While *Selo Stepanchikovo* is far less comic than *Diadiushkin son*, there is still an element of playful self-reference in the text, as well as the metadramatic quality of the characters' own awareness of their theatricality.

We have addressed both of Dostoevsky's novellas as vaudevilles in prose, but what makes that appellation fitting for *Selo Stepanchikovo*? One important link between the two works is the figure of the uncle, so prominent in vaudevilles of the period. The uncle is no less important in *Selo Stepanchikovo*, as the narrator is the nephew of Colonel Rostanov, foil to Opiskin, and the reader's approach to the tale and all of its characters is made through this relationship. As in *Diadiushkin son*, this vaudeville uncle appears in the form of parody; he has no authority or autonomy and is constantly upstaged by Opiskin. *Selo Stepanchikovo* might seem to be devoid of the obvious markers of

<sup>188</sup> It is noteworthy, as Vladimir Tunimanov has pointed out, that the delayed introduction of Opiskin has a combined novelistic and dramatic function, melding the two genres together in one device. Tunimanov speaks of Shklovskii's concept of retardation (as enumerated in his *Teoriia prozy* [*Theory of Prose*, 1925]), but points out that it is particularly theatrical in *Selo Stepanchikovo* (Tunimanov 36-36).

<sup>189</sup> Frank 1983, 279.

vaudeville that *Diadiushkin son* possesses (the sections narrated in present tense, the readily identifiable *balagan* and vaudeville figure of the uncle), but its use of the figure of the jester is no less pervasive, its dramatic scenes no less theatrically staged.

As we saw in *Diadiushkin son*, there are also formal markers of the theatrical and dramatic in *Selo Stepanchikovo*. Chapters are often broken with the unexpected stage entrances of characters who have just been under discussion, there is no shortage of fainting and characters falling at others' feet, frequent eavesdropping greases the wheels of the plot, and the text comes very close to observing the classical unities.<sup>190</sup> Even the spaces of the novella seem to be designed as sets—most scenes take place in the drawing room, where scandals break loose, or in intimate spaces like bedrooms, where tête-à-têtes occur. In content, both novellas are chiefly concerned with a love plot and marriage arrangements—the concerns of comedy and vaudeville.

Like *Diadiushkin son*, *Selo Stepanchikovo* makes ample reference to classical comedy, creating a grotesque mixture of high-brow and popular drama. Early in the text, a comic argument between master and servant reminds us of such scenes in *Revizor*, complete with a crowd of spectators to watch the humor unfold; the slapstick element of Gogolian humor is present in the stolid narrator's clumsy act of tripping over the carpet during his first meeting with the family (3: 20, 42).<sup>191</sup> More significantly, not only is Opiskin a perfect analog to Molière's *Tartuffe*, but a number of other characters in Dostoevsky's novella align with their counterparts in Molière's play. Alekseev was the first to note this almost complete one-to-one correspondence of characters, with Rostanev as Orgon, his mother as Madame Pernelle, and Bakhcheev as Cléante.<sup>192</sup> The text likewise mirrors the central conflict of the play, in which a tyrant rules over those surrounding him, only to be divested of power at the conclusion, in time for a happy wedding between young lovers, now freed from the control of their unkind despot. One scholar goes so far as to suggest that without such complexities as the mirroring of Molière's play, *Selo Stepanchikovo* would be no more than an ordinary melodrama.<sup>193</sup> Others argue, however, that Opiskin is more psychologically complex than *Tartuffe*, and I must agree with them; when Dostoevsky takes a character from drama and places him in prose, it is not a one-to-one correspondence.<sup>194</sup> Just as we saw with the other characters in *Selo Stepanchikovo*, the figure of Opiskin is opened to greater possibilities in prose; his motivations and actions set him apart from *Tartuffe*.<sup>195</sup> The temporal limitations of the dramatic form would not allow for the kind of development that Dostoevsky grants Opiskin, from his humble beginnings to his embittered servitude, his delusions of fame,

<sup>190</sup> Mochul'skii is one of many scholars to point these elements out; he outlines the events of the novella as a series of scandals leading to a happy denouement (Mochul'skii 142-45). Alekseev offers the same conclusions, arguing that the structure of *Selo Stepanchikovo* suggests the "stitching together" of comic scenes that Dostoevskii described in his letters about the composition of his comic novel (Alekseev 56).

<sup>191</sup> These comic scenes between master and servant are not unique to *Revizor*, but feature prominently in French comedies as well. Kristin Vitalich has recently treated this episode, within the context of the links between Opiskin and *Tartuffe*, as evidence of parody and comic mechanization. Kristin Vitalich, "The Village of *Stepanchikovo*: Toward a (Lacanian) Theory of Parody," *Slavic and East European Journal* (53:2, Summer 2009): 203-218.

<sup>192</sup> Alekseev 57-60.

<sup>193</sup> Tunimanov 31.

<sup>194</sup> Dostoevskii 3: 502.

<sup>195</sup> Like Dostoevskii's *Underground Man*, Opiskin does not always act in his own self-interest, but sometimes takes pleasure in acting against his self-interest.

piety, and literary glory, and his final defeat, after which he nonetheless continues to exercise his power over the Rostanov household.

There is something more in the character of Opiskin: in this figure, Dostoevsky parodies Gogol *himself*. The first scholar to point out this connection was Yuri Tynianov, and he convincingly lays out the sections from Gogol's didactic and critically excoriated *Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druz'iami* (*Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*, 1847) that form the majority of Opiskin's laughable and ludicrous opinions.<sup>196</sup> Further still, Tynianov finds many of Opiskin's tics and personal habits identical to those of the older Gogol, in his years of religious fanaticism before his untimely death in 1852. Not all scholars agree on this correspondence between Opiskin and Gogol, but there is certainly enough evidence to consider it a possibility.<sup>197</sup> Whether Opiskin is Gogol or not, the character's views do undoubtedly align with those expressed by Gogol in *Vybrannye mesta*.<sup>198</sup> Dostoevsky's characterization provides another unusual parody; if in *Diadiushkin son* he parodies an entire genre, in *Selo Stepanchikovo* he parodies an individual writer in addition to his works.

Like *Diadiushkin son*, this novella also abounds with dramatic self-consciousness—the author raises his characters to his own plane by giving them some awareness of the kind of text in which they appear. Just as the characters consistently identify Opiskin and Ezhevikin as jesters, so they also recognize that they are trapped in some kind of comedy. Just before the final eruption of Opiskin's temper, accompanied quite theatrically by a thunderstorm, Mizinchikov draws the narrator in for the spectacle: “Говорю вам: прямо к Фоме Фомичу! Идите за мной; вы там еще не были. Увидите другую комедию... Так как уж дело пошло на комедии...” (“I am telling you: go straight to Foma Fomich! Follow me; you haven't been there. You will see another comedy... since it has already come to comedy...”) (3: 129). The horrible scene that follows might not seem to be a comedy, as Mizinchikov promises, but once Opiskin is dragged in from the rain, after Rostanov has finally banished him, good will abounds, and the penultimate chapter is actually entitled “Foma Fomich sozidaet vseobshchee schast'e” (“Foma Fomich Creates Universal Happiness”). Although this title is highly ironic, a more traditionally comedic ending could not be imagined, and Mizinchikov's remark to the narrator proves to be clairvoyant after all.

## Conclusion

Within the larger context of the Russian novel of the 1850s, Dostoevsky is not unique in using elements of drama and theater. We have seen Turgenev rely upon eavesdropping and a number of other dramatic moments in *Rudin*. Goncharov also borrows sequences of action and constructions of space from classical comedy, and from Gogol in particular. Yet neither of the other two novelists so wholly incorporates a dramatic character into a prose text as Dostoevsky does. What is more, his

<sup>196</sup> Tynianov 434-55.

<sup>197</sup> Moisei Al'tman suggests that Opiskin might in fact be a parody of the playwright Nikolai Kukol'nik (Al'tman 36); Tunimanov disagrees with Tynianov's reading (Tunimanov 40-43); Viktor Vinogradov likewise disagrees, and offers the playwrights Kukol'nik and Polevoi as more likely alternatives. Viktor Vinogradov, “Etiudi o stile Gogol'ia” in *Izbrannye trudy: Poetika russkoi literatury* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), 239-240.

<sup>198</sup> Tynianov 429-55; Frank 1983, 42.

omniverousness in the matter of dramatic borrowings, specifically his use of popular and “low” genres, such as vaudeville and *balagan*, sets his work apart. Occasional evocation of classical comedy contributes to the overall grotesque aspect of his texts.

These early works from the 1850s are certainly no match to Dostoevsky's mature novels. Dostoevsky's mature novels feature dramatic scenes and characters, to be sure, but they are set within the wide expanse of time and space that the novel allows, and they are brought to the reader through a highly-developed novelistic narrator, who serves as the mediator between text and reader. In the Siberian novellas we are left with more drama than novel.

Their obvious aesthetic shortcomings notwithstanding, we can still see in the Siberian novellas another facet of the role of drama in the novel of the 1850s. What is more, taking a long view of Dostoevsky's career, we can view these early experiments with the comic form as a foreshadowing of his engagement with tragedy in his later novels, and certainly of his continued interest in theatricality and performativity among his characters. Near the end of *Idiot* Dostoevsky makes an important statement about the depiction of characters, and he uses Gogol's *Zhenit'ba* (*The Marriage*, 1842) and Moliere's *George Dandin ou le Mari confondu* (*Georges Dandin, or The Confounded Husband*, 1668) as his examples:

Писатели в своих романах и повестях большею частию стараются брать типы общества и представлять их образно и художественно, -- типы, чрезвычайно редко встречающиеся в действительности целиком и которые тем не менее почти действительнее самой действительности. Подколесин в своем типическом виде, может быть, даже и преувеличение, но отнюдь не небывальщина. Какое множество умных людей, узнав от Гоголя про Подколесина, тотчас же стали находить, что десятки и сотни их добрых знакомых и друзей ужасно похожи на Подколесина. Они и до Гоголя знали, что эти друзья их такие, как Подколесин, но только не знали еще, что они именно так называются. В действительности женихи ужасно редко прыгают из окошек пред своими свадьбами, потому что это, не говоря уже о прочем, даже и неудобно; тем не менее сколько женихов, даже людей достойных и умных, пред венцом сами себя в глубине совести готовы были признать Подколесинными. Не все тоже мужья кричат на каждом шагу: "Tu l'as voulu, George Dandin!". Но, боже, сколько миллионов и миллиардов раз повторялся мужьями целого света этот сердечный крик после их медового месяца, а, кто знает, может быть, и на другой же день после свадьбы. Итак, не вдаваясь в более серьезные объяснения, мы скажем только, что в действительности типичность лиц как бы разбавляется водой и все эти Жорж Дандены и Подколесины существуют действительно, снуют и бегают пред нами ежедневно, но как бы несколько в разжиженном состоянии.<sup>199</sup>

For the most part, writers try in their novels and stories to take certain social types and present them vividly and artistically—types that are only rarely met in real life and yet are nonetheless more real than real life. Podkolyosin [from Gogol's *Zhenit'ba*], as a type, may be an exaggeration, but he is not by any means an invention. How many intelligent people, having learned of Podkolyosin from

<sup>199</sup> Dostoevskii 8: 383-84.



Gogol, suddenly began to find that dozens and even hundreds of their dear acquaintances and friends were terribly similar to Podkolyosin. They knew before they read Gogol that their friends were like Podkolyosin, but they did not know that Podkolyosin was their name. In real life grooms very rarely jump out of windows before their weddings because it is, all else aside, not very convenient; and yet how many grooms, nonetheless, worthy and intelligent men, on the eve of their weddings have been ready to admit in their depths of their conscience that they are Podkolyosins. Not all husbands cry at every step, “Tu l'as voulu, George Dandin!” But, by God, how many millions and billions of times has this cry been repeated in the hearts of husbands all over the world after their honeymoons or maybe even the day after their weddings. Therefore, not going into more serious explanations, we will only say that these types are simply watered down in real life, and that these Georges Dandins and Podkolyosins really exist, and they dart and run around us every day, albeit in a slightly diluted form.

Dostoevsky is mainly involved in the discussion of the popular category of type here, but this statement also throws some light on his use of dramatic figures in his novels. He takes caricatured figures from farce or comedies and transforms them, through the expanses of time and space permitted in the novel and through the extensive work of the novelistic narrator, into real characters, persons a reader might identify with those he knows in real life. In *Diadiushkin son* and *Selo Stepanchikovo* in the 1850s Dostoevsky took his first steps towards creation of novelistic characters, and he did this with the help of popular theater and drama.

**Chapter 4: Drama in Tolstoy's *Voyna i mir* (War and Peace): Gesture and Interiority (Re) Interpreted**

The focus of this study is the developing Russian novel of the 1850s, but what happens to the dramatic mode of narration in the more established Russian novel of the 1860s? A unique case study is provided by Tolstoy's *Voyna i mir* (*War and Peace*, 1865-69), which he began writing as early as 1856 and published throughout the 1860s. The comparison is all the more striking because Tolstoy uses the same dramatic elements that Turgenev does in *Rudin*, but in a markedly different way. To be sure, Tolstoy is far more commonly associated with the epic than with drama, and nowhere more strongly than in the massive expanse of *Voyna i mir*.<sup>200</sup> The dissociation between Tolstoy and drama is likely due in part to the author's famously conflicted relationship with the world of theater, but the generic mode is nonetheless of great relevance to his work.

Henry James' famous classification of *Voyna i mir* as a "loose and baggy monster" provides a colorful image of the difficulty of associating such a lengthy and diverse piece of prose with a clearly-defined generic category.<sup>201</sup> Readers and scholars of the text are not alone in this quandary—Tolstoy himself confirmed that his work was beyond the confines of any one genre. In his 1867 essay "Neskol'ko slov po povodu knigi *Voyna i mir*" ("A Few Words about the Book *War and Peace*"), Tolstoy addresses the problem of genre and comes to the following conclusion: "Что такое «Война и мир»? Это не роман, еще менее поэма, еще менее историческая хроника. «Война и мир» есть то, что хотел и мог выразить автор в той форме, в которой оно выразилось" ("What is *War and Peace*? It is not a novel, still less an epic poem, still less a historical chronicle. *War and Peace* is that which the author wished to express and was able to express, in the form in which it was expressed").<sup>202</sup> Significantly, Tolstoy skirts the issue of genre even in the title of his remarks, where he refers to *Voyna i mir* not as a novel, but more vaguely as a *book*.

Defying the strictures of genre is actually a mark of literary prestige in Tolstoy's view. He justifies the "non-genre" of his work by tracing exemplars of this phenomenon throughout Russian literature:

История русской литературы со времени Пушкина не только представляет много примеров такого отступления от европейской формы, но не дает даже ни одного примера противного. Начиная от «Мертвых Душ» Гоголя и до «Мертвого Дома» Достоевского, в новом периоде русской литературы нет ни одного художественного прозаического произведения, немного

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<sup>200</sup> To give just one example, in his study of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, George Steiner consistently identifies the former with drama and the latter with the epic. George Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in the Old Criticism* (New York: Knopf, 1959), 9, 12, 18.

<sup>201</sup> Henry James, "Preface to *The Tragic Muse*," in *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces by Henry James* (New York: Scribner, 1934), 84.

<sup>202</sup> All subsequent references to Tolstoy's works are to the 90-volume edition and will appear parenthetically in the body of the text, with the volume preceding the page number. L. N. Tolstoy, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (*Complete Collected Works*) (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1928-1958), 16: 7. Tolstoy expresses similar concerns in four unpublished and undated prefaces to the novel, which appear in "Vstupleniia, Predisloviia i varianty nachal 'Voiny i mira'" ("Introductions, Forwards and Variations of the Beginning of *War and Peace*") (13: 53-57). All translations in the body text and notes are mine unless otherwise indicated.

выходящего из посредственности, которое бы вполне укладывалось в форму романа, поэмы или повести. (16: 7)

The history of Russian literature from the time of Pushkin not only presents many examples of such deviation from European forms, but does not present one example of adherence to these forms. From Gogol's *Dead Souls* to Dostoevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead*, in the current period of Russian literature there is not one artistic work of prose that departs at all from mediocrity that fits neatly into the form of the novel, the epic poem, or the tale.

While Tolstoy's argument about the genre-bending history of Russian literature implicitly praises the generic indeterminacy of *Voyna i mir*, it has not stopped scholars from seeking to identify its generic components, such as the family novel, the epic, the Bildungsroman, and the historical chronicle.<sup>203</sup> The generic mode of drama does not often enter into these discussions, but I would like to offer a study of its presence in the text to add to the expansive repertoire of genres identified in earlier scholarship.

Of all the authors featured in this study, Tolstoy has the most complex relationship with drama. Turgenev borrows dramatic textual structure and makes frequent references to the stage, Goncharov's borrowings from comedy are evident, and Dostoevsky takes some of his central characters from popular theater, but Tolstoy places his use of drama in disguise. Particularly in Part I of the novel, published under the title "1805," the dramatic narrative structure, featuring an abundance of dialogue and gestures that function as stage directions, serves a very specific purpose in forming the relationship between author, character, and reader. Although, like Goncharov, Tolstoy does not use this dramatic narrative structure throughout the entire text, he continues to employ drama as a structuring device and as a metaphor that illustrates his authorial principles on the level of the character. This chapter addresses the ways in which the dramatic form is useful to Tolstoy in constructing the text and shaping his readers' response to it, and the ways in which the awareness of this generic mode can aid readers in the act of interpreting the novel.

### **The Problem of the Beginning and an Experiment in Scripting**

Of all the writers in the nineteenth-century Russian canon, Tolstoy is known as the one with the strongest and most controlling authorial voice. *Voyna i mir* is certainly no exception to this rule, as Tolstoy gives free reign to his historical and philosophical musings in the second epilogue of the novel, which reads more as an impassioned treatise than as a text that belongs in a novel. This reading of Tolstoy's authorial control is so prevalent as to sometimes appear caricatured, but, in fact, he himself clearly states his intentions with regard to readers' interpretations in "Neskol'ko slov po povodu knigi *Voyna i mir*:"

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<sup>203</sup> R.F. Christian provides a thoughtful discussion of some of these generic modes in his book *Tolstoy: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 97-105. Gary Saul Morson includes a summary of Russian scholarship on the genre of *War and Peace* in his book *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in War and Peace* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 173-176.

Мне хотелось, чтобы читатели не видели и не искали в моей книге того, чего я не хотел или не умел выразить, и обратили бы внимание на то именно, что я хотел выразить, но на чем (по условиям произведения) не считал удобным останавливаться (16: 7).

I would not like readers to see or search for the things I did not want to or did not know how to express in my book. I would like them to pay attention precisely to what I wanted to express, but which, because of the terms of the work, I did not find it convenient to expound upon.

This statement is so strong as to almost appear humorous (Tolstoy expects his readers to understand what he wanted to communicate to them, even though he did not actually write it in his novel), but his appeal to them is made entirely in earnest. While this desire for control over readers' interpretation of his text is most visible in the second epilogue, a close reading of the novel reveals that this impulse is present from the very beginning, even if it is cleverly disguised. This line of inquiry does require some speculation about authorial intention and readerly response, but in the case of Tolstoy, I find that this experimental approach is fitting.

Tolstoy's difficulties in beginning his novel are well-documented. Inspired by the return of the Decembrists from Siberia in 1856, Tolstoy set about planning a novel, which he called *Dekabristy* (*The Decembrists*), to chronicle and comment upon their experience; this novel marked a departure for him, as his drafts contain an extraordinary amount of historical and political material.<sup>204</sup> He soon found, however, that in order to adequately portray the Decembrists, he had to return to 1812, the year of Napoleon's unsuccessful campaign in Russia. Soon he found that he needed to go even further back, to 1805, when Napoleon's European campaign spread throughout Europe.<sup>205</sup> The historical and political focus of Tolstoy's plans is important to bear in mind, for, in spite of the text's close focus on the social world of early nineteenth-century Russia, at its core are the events upon which Tolstoy wished to express his heartfelt opinions. Tolstoy found himself facing a conundrum: how could he clearly communicate his ideas and opinions to his readers without their realizing that it was his authorial voice shaping their responses?<sup>206</sup>

Tolstoy's interest in drama in 1856 provided an important backdrop to the beginning of his work on *Voyna i mir*. He also returned to drama in 1863, pausing work on his novel to write a five-act comedy, *Zarazhennoe semeistvo* (*An Infected Family*), in response to the polemics surrounding Chernyshevsky's novel *Chto delat'?* (*What is to Be Done?*, 1863). Tolstoy is consistently didactic in his dramatic works (most especially in those written late in his career, *Vlast' t'my* (*The Power of Darkness*, 1886) and *Plody prosveshcheniia* (*The Fruits of Enlightenment*, 1889)), and yet, as we will see, it is

<sup>204</sup> The Decembrist uprising on December 14, 1825 was a protest against Nikolai I's assumption of the throne. The uprising was unsuccessful, and many of those involved were sent to exile in Siberia. In 1856, when Alexander II rose to the throne, the Decembrists were granted amnesty and allowed to return to Russia. For a full account of this uprising and its aftermath, see Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia (Fourth Edition)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 319-322.

<sup>205</sup> Kathryn Feuer provides excellent analysis of these early stages of Tolstoy's work on *Voyna i mir* in her book *Tolstoy and the Genesis of War and Peace* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 13-134.

<sup>206</sup> In her analysis of the early drafts of the text Feuer discusses at length Tolstoy's struggle to communicate clearly to his reader without revealing his voice of authorial judgment (109-134).

actually the *undermining* of the dramatic form in *Voina i mir* that allows him to project his own strong viewpoints on his readers, sometimes without their knowledge.

In his seminal work *Lev Tolstoi II, 60-e gody* (*Leo Tolstoy in the Sixties*, 1931) Boris Eikhenbaum discusses in detail Tolstoy's literary projects during his years of work on *Voina i mir*. In 1856, when Tolstoy began work on *Dekabristy*, he was also writing dramatic sketches, specifically comedies based on the farces of Molière.<sup>207</sup> Tolstoy's plays are similar to those of the French playwright in their focus on contemporary social issues and their clearly defined moral universe. Tolstoy adopts Molière's classicist effort, as stated in his preface to *Tartuffe*, to "corriger les vices des hommes" through "la peinture de leurs défauts."<sup>208</sup> Book One Part One of *Voina i mir*, in spite of the political conversations of the characters, leaves the reader with the expectation of a traditional comedic intrigue: there is the suggestion of a flirtation between Ippolit and the newlywed and pregnant Princess Liza, and a plan is set in motion to marry the rogue Anatole Kuragin off to the homely, but wealthy, Maria Bolkonskaia. Beyond these dramatic markers in the plot, even more remarkable is one of the early working titles for the novel: *Vse khorosho, chto khorosho konchaetsia* (*All's Well that Ends Well*), which is the title of one of Shakespeare's comedies.<sup>209</sup>

The early drafts of *War and Peace* reveal Tolstoy's vacillation between numerous opening strategies, shuttling between strong authorial proclamations to a more nuanced presentation of characters and events. He wrote several historical introductions that detailed the political and military situation in 1805 and revealed his opinions on the existing histories of the period. He wrote several different ball scenes, some of them also beginning with historical musings. He experimented with various dinners, name-day parties, and salons. The beginning he finally chose, however, was the soiree at Anna Pavlovna Scherer's, which starts not with Tolstoy's views on history or even the

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<sup>207</sup> Boris Eikhenbaum, *Lev Tolstoi II, 60-e gody* (*Leo Tolstoy in the 1860s*) (Leningrad-Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1931), 211-222. The titles of the four comedies that Tolstoy was working on are as follows: *Dvorianskoe semeistvo* (*A Noble Family*), *Prakticheskii chelovek* (*A Practical Man*), *Diadiushkino blagoslovenie* (*Uncle's Blessing*), and *Svobodnaia liubov'* (*Free Love*). We cannot help but note that *Diadiushkino blagoslovenie* testifies to Tolstoy's interest in the figure of the vaudeville uncle. Tolstoy's extensive use of French in the dialogue in this scene may also reflect his preoccupation with the works of Molière. For a detailed discussion of the Russian theater in the 1860s and a full catalogue of its repertoires see *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra* (*The History of the Russian Dramatic Theater*), Vol. 5 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1980). For a treatment of Tolstoy's experiences with theater and his shifting attitudes toward it see Elena Poliakova, *Teatr L'va Tolstogo* (*The Theater of Leo Tolstoy*) (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1978).

<sup>208</sup> Molière, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Editions Garnier Freres, 1962), 1: 629-30.

<sup>209</sup> Eikhenbaum, 244. Eikhenbaum posits that this title was used from 1865-1866. Tolstoy does not make explicit mention of this particular play in his writings, but it is quite possible that he had either read it or heard of it by this time. It was performed in Moscow under the title *Vse khorosho, chto khorosho konchilos'* (*All's Well That Ended Well*) (in Nikolai Ketcher's 1846 translation from the English) six times between November 12, 1856 and February 4, 1866; Tolstoy was in Moscow during the time of its final performance. *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra* (*History of the Russian Dramatic Theater*), 5: 431. N. N. Gusev, *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva L'va Tolstogo: 1828-1890* (*Chronicle of the Life and Works of Leo Tolstoy: 1828-1890*) (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1958), 319-320. The question of Tolstoy's attitude toward Shakespeare, called to attention by his 1903 essay "O Shekspire i o drame" ("On Shakespeare and on Drama"), is given a very thoughtful treatment by George Gibian in his study *Tolstoj and Shakespeare*, *Musagetes Contributions to the History of Slavic Literature and Culture*, ed. Dmitrii Chizhevskii, Vol. 4, (The Hague: Mouton, 1957).

introductory voice of a narrator within the story, but rather with Anna Pavlovna's own words.

Following suit, the rest of the salon scene is distinctive in its limited presentation of events and characters; there is much dialogue and external detail, but only the sparsest of information about the interiority of the characters. Within Part One of Book One, in fact, there are no interior monologues at all, distinguishing it from the rest of the novel, in which this narrative technique is vital to the portrayal of character development (we need only recall, for instance, Andrei's thoughts while gazing at the sky at Austerlitz, or his emotional and spiritual struggles as he lies on his deathbed). The absence of direct narration of interiority appears even more puzzling in light of the fact that Tolstoy *did* have interior monologues and statements about the feelings of his characters planned for Part One, as for instance, in the following description of Anna Pavlovna: "Вопросы внутренних интриг видимо мало интересовали Annette. Она потухала и делалась достойно печальна. Она искренно вся была предана только одной страсти-ненависти к Наполеону и желанию войны во что бы то не стало" ("It was clear that questions of social intrigue were of little concern to Annette. She looked down and made herself appear properly chagrined. She was sincerely given over to only one passion—hatred for Napoleon and the desire for war under any circumstances") (13: 202, manuscript 49). The final version of the novel gives us only Anna Pavlovna's quoted speech; this omniscient narrative statement of her passions and political leanings is erased.

Tolstoy conceals his voice, I argue, in order to allow the reader the illusion of coming to his or her own conclusions; though his drafts reveal his strong opinions about certain characters and their ideologies, it is important to him that readers reach these conclusions on their own. Kathryn Feuer tellingly describes Tolstoy's attempt to disguise his narrative voice in Percy Lubbock's terms: "to raise [...] the narrative [...] to a power approaching that of drama, where the intervention of the storyteller is no longer felt."<sup>210</sup> We recall that this is the same method used by Turgenev, although for an entirely different reason. Turgenev had not yet developed a strong third-person narrative voice; Tolstoy was more than capable of it, but chose to let his characters (and their gestures) speak in his place, so as not to overwhelm the reader with his judgments. After the removal of lengthy authorial commentary, the characters are presented more directly, through their speech, gestures, tones, and facial expressions. Tolstoy creates the illusion of a world that has been observed, but not interpreted, one in which readers can take the words and gestures of the characters at face value and draw their own conclusions about them.

And yet, this narrative technique is an illusion. Tolstoy presents his characters externally, but then uses this outer appearance as grounds for identifying the character's inner thoughts or motivations. Instead of directly reporting the character's interior state, Tolstoy couples an external presentation with an identification of its meaning. By linking the external and the internal, Tolstoy manipulates the principles of both dramatic and novelistic narration in order to create his own level of authorial presence: less intrusive than we might expect in a novel, but more present than drama would allow.

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<sup>210</sup> Kathryn Feuer, *Tolstoy and the Genesis of War and Peace* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 124. Feuer cites from Percy Lubbock's *Craft of Fiction* (1931); she discusses and responds to Lubbock's conclusions on Tolstoy's novel in a footnote on pp. 251-252.

This tension between Tolstoy's desire to control his readers' interpretations and his desire to appear absent from his text is even more apparent when the novel is viewed in a dramatic format, which can be achieved through only the slightest rearrangement of the narration and dialogue in the text. To transform Tolstoy's text into such a "script," I have made only two modifications to the text: verbs in the past tense have been shifted to the present to reflect dramatic convention, and some of the initial narration has been reformatted in order to create the standard list of dramatis personae and setting at the beginning of a play. Recasting the text in this dramatic format allows for the identification of three distinct components of narration: dialogue; external details, such as gestures and tones of speech; and interior details, such as emotions and motivations. The numerous gestures, facial expressions, and tones of speech form a large body of "stage directions," which I have placed in parentheses in the script. I have reconstructed the opening scene of the novel, the soirée at Anna Pavlovna Scherer's, as follows:<sup>211</sup>

## ***ВОЙНА И МИР***

### **Действие Первое, Картина Первая**

#### **Действующие лица**

**Анна Павловна Шерер**, сорок лет, известная фрейлина и приближенная императрицы Марии Феодоровны. Она кашляла несколько дней, у нее *грипп*, как она говорит (*грипп* был тогда новое слово, употреблявшееся только редкими).

**Князь Василий**, важный и чиновный, первый приехавший на вечер.

#### **Обстановка**

Гостиная Анны Павловны Шерер в июле 1805 года. В записочках, разосланных утром с

красным лакеем, было написано без различия во всех:

"Si vous n'avez rien de mieux à faire, M. le comte (или mon prince), et si la perspective de passer la soirée chez une pauvre malade ne vous effraye pas trop, je serai charmée de vous voir chez moi entre 7 et 10 heures.  
Annette Scherer"

**Анна Павловна Шерер**: Eh bien, mon prince. Gênes et Lucques ne sont plus que des arpanages, des поместья, de la famille Buonaparte. Non, je vous préviens, que si vous ne me dites pas, que nous avons la guerre, si vous vous permettez encore de pallier toutes les infamies, toutes les atrocités de cet Antichrist (ma parole, j'y crois) -- je ne vous connais plus, vous n'êtes plus mon ami, vous n'êtes plus мой верный раб, comme vous dites. Ну, здравствуйте, здравствуйте. Je vois que je vous fais peur, садитесь и рассказывайте.

**Князь Василий**: (*в придворном, шитом мундире, в чулках, башмаках, при звездах, с светлым выражением плоского лица. Нисколько не смутясь такою встречей, говоря на том изысканном французском языке, на котором не только говорили, но и думали наши деды, и с теми тихими, покровительственными интонациями, которые свойственны состарившемуся в свете и при дворе значительному человеку.*)

<sup>211</sup> For the original text of this scene see 9: 3-9.

Dieu, quelle virulente sortie.

*(подходит к Анне Павловне, целует ее руку, подставляет ей свою надушенную и сияющую лысину, и покойно усаживается на диване.)*

Avant tout dites moi, comment vous allez, chère amie? Успокойте друга.

*(Не изменяя голоса и тоном, в котором из-за приличия и участия просвечивало равнодушие и даже насмешка.)*

**Анна Павловна Шерер:** Как можно быть здоровой... когда нравственно страдаешь? Разве можно оставаться спокойною в наше время, когда есть у человека чувство? Вы весь вечер у меня, надеюсь?

**Князь Василий:** А праздник английского посланника? Нынче среда. Мне надо показаться там. Дочь заедет за мной и повезет меня.

**Анна Павловна Шерер:** Я думала, что нынешний праздник отменен. Je vous avoue que toutes ces fêtes et tous ces feux d'artifice commencent à devenir insipides.

**Князь Василий:** Ежели бы знали, что вы этого хотите, праздник бы отменили. *(по привычке, как заведенные часы, говоря вещи, которым он и не хотел, чтобы верили.)*

**Анна Павловна Шерер:** Ne me tourmentez pas. Eh bien, qu'a-t-on décidé par rapport à la dépêche de Novosiizoff? Vous savez tout.

**Князь Василий:** *(холодным, скупающим тоном)*  
Как вам сказать? Qu'a-t-on décidé? On a décidé que Buonaparte a brûlé ses vaisseaux, et je crois que nous sommes en train de brûler les nôtres.  
*(говоря всегда лениво, как актер говорит роль старой пьесы.)*

[...]

**Анна Павловна Шерер:** *(опять успокоиваясь)*  
Сейчас. A propos, нынче у меня два очень интересные человека, le vicomte de Mortemart, il est allié aux Montmorency par les Rohans, одна из лучших фамилий Франции. Это один из хороших эмигрантов, из настоящих. И потом l'abbé Morio: вы знаете этот глубокий ум? Он был принят государем. Вы знаете?

**Князь Василий:** А! Я очень рад буду.  
*(как будто только что вспомнив что-то и особенно-небрежно, тогда как то, о чем он спрашивал, было главной целью его посещения.)*  
Скажите, правда, что l'impératrice-mère желает назначения барона Функе первым секретарем в Вену? C'est un pauvre sire, ce baron, à ce qu'il paraît.  
*(Князь Василий желал определить сына на это место, которое через императрицу Марию Феодоровну старались доставить барону.)*



**Анна Павловна Шерер:** (*почти закрывая глаза в знак того, что ни она, ни кто другой не могут судить про то, что угодно или нравится императрице.*)  
 Monsieur le baron de Funke a été recommandé à l'impératrice-mère par sa soeur.  
 (*грустным, сухим тоном. Лицо ее вдруг представляет глубокое и искреннее выражение преданности и уважения, соединенное с грустью, что с ней бывает каждый раз, когда она в разговоре упоминает о своей высокой покровительнице.*)  
 Ее величество изволила оказать барону Функе beaucoup d'estime.  
 (*опять взгляд ее подергаясь грустью.*)

(**Князь Василий** равнодушно молчит.)

**Анна Павловна Шерер:** (*с свойственной ей придворною и женскою ловкостью и быстротою такта, желая и щелкнуть князя за то, что он дерзает так отозваться о лице, рекомендованном императрице, и в то же время утешить его.*)

Mais à propos de votre famille, connaissez-vous, que votre fille, depuis qu'elle est partie, fait les délices de tout le monde. On la trouve belle, comme le jour.

(**Князь Василий** наклоняется в знак уважения и признательности.  
 Молчание.)

**Анна Павловна Шерер:** Я часто думаю,  
 (*подвигаясь к князю и ласково улыбаясь ему, как будто выказывая этим, что политические и светские разговоры кончены и теперь начинается задушевный*)  
 я часто думаю, как иногда несправедливо распределяется счастье жизни. За что вам судьба дала таких двух славных детей, исключая Анатоля, вашего меньшого—я его не люблю.<sup>212</sup>

(*безапелляционно, приподнимая брови*)

Таких прелестных детей? А вы, право, менее всех цените их и потому их не стоите.  
 (*улыбаясь своею восторженной улыбкой.*)

## WAR AND PEACE

### Act I, Scene I

#### Dramatis Personae

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer**, forty years old, a well-known lady-in-waiting and favorite of the Empress Maria Feodorovna. She has been coughing for several days and has *la grippe*, as she says (*la grippe* was at that time a new word, used only by the elite).

**Prince Vasily**, a man of importance and rank; he is the first to arrive at the soiree.

#### Setting

<sup>212</sup> The last phrase appears in parentheses in Tolstoy's original prose text.

The drawing room of Anna Pavlovna Scherer in July 1805. All of the invitations for the evening were written without exception in French and delivered that morning by a red-liveried footman. They read:

"Si vous n'avez rien de mieux à faire, M. le comte (or mon prince), et si la perspective de passer la soirée chez une pauvre malade ne vous effraye pas trop, je serai charmée de vous voir chez moi entre 7 et 10 heures.  
Annette Scherer"

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer:** Eh bien, mon prince. Gênes et Lucques ne sont plus que des apanages, des estates, de la famille Buonaparte. Non, je vous préviens, que si vous ne me dites pas, que nous avons la guerre, si vous vous permettez encore de pallier toutes les infamies, toutes les atrocités de cet Antichrist (ma parole, j'y crois) -- je ne vous connais plus, vous n'êtes plus mon ami, vous n'êtes plus my faithful slave, comme vous dites. Well, hello, hello. Je vois que je vous fais peur, sit down and tell me the news.

**Prince Vasily:** *(In an embroidered court uniform, breeches, and socks, with stars on his uniform and a bright expression on his flat face. Not at all disturbed by this greeting, he speaks in that elegant French that our grandfathers not only spoke, but also thought. He speaks with that quiet, condescending intonation that is characteristic of a man of importance who has grown old in society and at court.)*

Dieu, quelle virulente sortie.

*(He approaches Anna Pavlovna, kisses her hand, presenting to her his perfumed and shining bald head, and calmly seats himself on the sofa.)*

Avant tout dites moi, comment vous allez, chère amie? Set the mind of a friend at ease. *(Not changing his voice or tone, in which, underneath the decorum and sympathy, indifference and even irony shone through.)*

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer:** How can one be well...when one is morally suffering? Is it really possible to remain calm in our time if one has any feeling? You are staying all evening, I hope?

**Prince Vasily:** And the fete at the English ambassador's? Today is Wednesday. I need to make an appearance there. My daughter is coming for me to take me there.

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer:** I thought today's fete was canceled. Je vous avoue que toutes ces fêtes et tous ces feux d'artifice commencent à devenir insipides.

**Prince Vasily:** If they had known that you wished it, it would have been canceled. *(According to habit, like a wound-up clock, saying things that even he did not wish to be believed.)*

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer:** Ne me tourmentez pas. Eh bien, qu'a-t-on décidé par rapport à la dépêche de Novosiizoff? Vous savez tout.

**Prince Vasily:** *(In a cold, bored tone)*

What can I tell you? Qu'a-t-on décidé? On a décidé que Buonaparte a brûlé ses vaisseaux, et je crois que nous sommes en train de brûler les nôtres.

*(Speaking always lazily, like an actor recites a role from an old play.)*

[...]

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer:** *(Again calming down)*

Now. A propos, today I have two interesting people, le vicomte de Mortemart, il est allié aux Montmorency par les Rohans, one of the best families in France. He is one of the good emigrants, one of the genuine ones. And then l'abbé Morio: do you know this deep thinker? He was received by the Emperor. Did you know?

**Prince Vasily:** Ah! I will be delighted to meet them.

*(With an air of carelessness, as if only just remembering something, when, in fact, that which he asked about was the main reason for his visit)*

Tell me, is it true that l'impératrice-mère wants Baron Funke to be appointed first secretary in Vienna? C'est un pauvre sire, ce baron, à ce qu'il paraît.

*(Prince Vasily wanted to secure this post for his son, but others were trying, through the influence of Empress Maria Feodorovna, to have it granted to the Baron.)*

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer:** *(Almost closing her eyes, as a sign that neither she nor anyone else could judge what the Empress desired or was pleased with.)*

Monsieur le baron de Funke a été recommandé à l'impératrice-mère par sa soeur.

*(With a sad, dry tone. Her face suddenly presents a deep and sincere expression of devotion and respect, mixed with sadness, which appears every time she mentions in conversation her famous benefactor.)*

Her Majesty has seen fit to show Baron Funke beaucoup d'estime.

*(Again her gaze shows sadness.)*

**(Prince Vasily is indifferently silent.)**

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer:** *(With the womanly and courtly politeness that was her habit, wanting to reprimand him for daring to speak negatively of a person recommended by the Empress, and at the same time to comfort him.)*

Mais à propos de votre famille, знаете ли, что ваша дочь с тех пор, как выезжает, fait les délices de tout le monde. On la trouve belle, comme le jour.

**(Prince Vasily bows as a sign of his respect and gratitude.**

*Silence.)*

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer:** I often think

*(Drawing near to the prince and smiling tenderly at him, as if showing by this that political and society conversations were over and that now was the time for intimate conversation.)*

I often think about how unfairly the joys of life are given out. Why has fate given you two such wonderful children—excluding Anatole, your youngest—I don't like him.

(*She speaks categorically, raising her eyebrows.*)

Two such delightful children? And you, it is true, value them less than anyone else, and thus you don't deserve them.

(*Smiling her ecstatic smile.*)

The comparison of Prince Vasily to an actor alerts the reader to the inauthenticity of his words; as we recall, Turgenev's narrator makes a very similar statement about Rudin, a character who is also not to be trusted.<sup>213</sup> In both cases, the judgment of the character for his theatrical behavior is the same.<sup>214</sup> Such overt hints at the theatrical in the text may lead the reader to consider the text in dramatic format, and the compositional history of *Voyna i mir* reveals that this approach is particularly appropriate; there are multiple indications that Tolstoy may indeed have been inspired by drama.

There are certainly some practical reasons why Tolstoy may have chosen to turn to drama in his composition of *Voyna i mir*. On a basic organizational level, it seems that the dramatic format aided Tolstoy in formulating and keeping track of the enormous "cast" of his novel. The character outlines in the early manuscripts and notebooks for the novel bear a strong resemblance to the lists of dramatis personae given at the beginning of a script, although usually providing much more detail (13:13-21). Tolstoy's self-proclaimed designs on his readers' interpretations provide one possible explanation for the almost excessive presence of "stage directions" in the novel. Firstly, it suggests that Tolstoy is presenting his readers with a visual as well as a textual experience, and his constant use of stage directions reveals his attempt to wield the tightest possible control over the physical appearance and movement of his "actors."<sup>215</sup> Secondly, and more significantly, it suggests that Tolstoy is deeply aware of the significance of gestures to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas that remain unspoken.<sup>216</sup> The body is, famously for

<sup>213</sup> Turgenev's narrator describes Rudin as follows: "Рудин встал. Весь разговор между ним и Дарьей Михайловной носил особый отпечаток. Актеры так репетируют свои роли, дипломаты так на конференциях меняются заранее условленными фразами..." ("Rudin stood up. The whole conversation between him and Daria Mikhailovna bore a particular mark. Thus do actors rehearse their roles, thus do diplomats exchange phrases agreed upon in advance..."). I. S. Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v tridsati tomakh* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978-1986), 5: 291.

<sup>214</sup> Here again I rely upon Elizabeth Burns' definition of theatricality: "Behavior can be described as 'theatrical' only by those who know what drama is [...] Behavior is not therefore theatrical because it is of a certain kind but because the observer recognizes certain patterns and sequences which are analogous to those with which he is familiar in the theater [...] it attaches to any kind of behavior perceived and interpreted by others and described (mentally or explicitly) in theatrical terms." Burns 12-13.

<sup>215</sup> Anatoly Altschuller notes that by the mid-nineteenth century authority in Russian drama had shifted from the actor to the playwright: "For most of the first half of the nineteenth century, the actor was regarded as the central figure in the theater [...] Belinsky described actors as the 'authors' of their roles... Whereas in 1820 it could be said that many characters were created as much by the actors as by the playwright, by about 1850... the persona of the author had become central in the creation of theater." "Actors and Acting, 1820-1850," in *A History of Russian Theater*, ed. Robert Leach and Victor Borovsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 104-5.

<sup>216</sup> Peter Brooks provides an excellent study of the expressive power of gestures in French melodrama of the early nineteenth century, which found their place in the European novel of the mid-nineteenth century. Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, and the Mode of Excess (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). Helena Goscilo makes a similar argument about gesture in Russian short fiction of the 1830s. Focusing on the works of Mikhail Lermontov and Evdokiia Rostopchina, she identifies the description of gestures as stage directions, imported from the world of drama, but she derides their presence in prose as overweening: "In prose they [stage directions] smack of

Tolstoy, an index of the mind and heart; by expressing meaning through gesture, he can limit his authoritative narrative voice, by *showing* readers what the characters are thinking and feeling, as opposed to *telling* them.

However, as aware as Tolstoy is of the expressive body, he cannot let it stand alone, open to the interpretation of the reader. This is made evident in the script experiment above. The dialogue and stage directions are perfectly suitable for a nineteenth-century play, but there is one significant element in the text that does not belong in a dramatic work of this period: interiority. By standard nineteenth-century dramatic convention, a playwright cannot enter into the consciousness of his characters; their thoughts, motivations, feelings, and desires are accessible only as reported by themselves. Here it is useful to recall Manfred Pfister's formulation of the lack of a mediating communication system in drama; there can be no narrative voice as a link between author and spectator, but rather, the author must communicate with the audience through the characters' words and actions.<sup>217</sup> It is this basic feature of drama that my experimental script brazenly violates, as Tolstoy constantly steps in to interpret his characters' speech and gestures *for* the reader. This is the aspect of the dramatic form that is unsuitable for Tolstoy's purposes, and in this script of *Voina i mir* it is a line that he constantly crosses.

A second script, a shorter section of the first, but with the revelations of interiority crossed out, vividly illustrates the many points at which Tolstoy asserts his interpretations, less directly, and yet no less authoritatively. In the variant below, the external stage directions remain, but those describing interiority have now been crossed out:

**Князь Василий:** А! Я очень рад буду.

*(как будто только что вспомнил что-то и особенно небрежно, тогда как то, о чем он спрашивал, было главной целью его посещения.)*

Скажите, правда, что l'impératrice-mère желает назначения барона Функе первым секретарем в Вену? C'est un pauvre sire, ce baron, à ce qu'il paraît.

*(Князь Василий желал определить сына на это место, которое через императрицу Марию Феодоровну старались доставить барону.)*

**Анна Павловна Шерер:** *(почти закрывая глаза в знак того, что ни она, ни кто другой не могут судить про то, что угодно или правится императрице.)*

Monsieur le baron de Funke a été recommandé à l'impératrice-mère par sa soeur.

*(грустным, сухим тоном. Лицо ее вдруг представляет глубокое и искреннее выражение преданности и уважения, соединенное с грустью, что с ней бывает каждый раз, когда она в разговоре упоминает о своей высокой покровительнице.)*

Ее величество изволила оказать барону Функе beaucoup d'estime.

bargain basement melodrama partly because to describe a gesture in words lends it excessive weight, whereas such physical gestures and tics of behavior in the flesh might conceivably seem natural." Helena Goscilo, "Stage and Page: Drama's Incursion into Russian Fiction of the 1830s," *Studia Filologica* 18:7 (1985): 100.

<sup>217</sup> Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, trans. John Halliday (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 2-4. Keir Elam makes a similar statement in his semiotic study of drama: "[...] worlds [...] are revealed through the persons, actions, and statements which make them up, and not through external commentary." Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theater and Drama* (New York: Methuen, 1980), 112, 119.

*(опять взгляд ее подергается грустью.)*

*(Князь Василий равнодушно молчит.)*

**Анна Павловна Шерер:** *(с свойственной ей придворною и женскою ловкостью и быстротою такта, желая и щелкнуть князя за то, что он дерзает так отозваться о лице, рекомендованном императрице, и в то же время утешить его.)*

Mais à propos de votre famille, savez li, что ваша дочь с тех пор, как выезжает, fait les délices de tout le monde. On la trouve belle, comme le jour.

*(Князь Василий наклоняется в знак уважения и признательности. Молчание.)*

**Анна Павловна Шерер:** Я часто думаю,  
*(подвигаясь к князю и ласково улыбаясь ему, как будто выказывая этим, что политические и светские разговоры кончены и теперь начинается задушевный)*  
я часто думаю, как иногда несправедливо распределяется счастье жизни. За что вам судьба дала таких двух славных детей (исключая Анатоля, вашего меньшого, я его не люблю)

*(безапелляционно, приподнимая брови)*

Таких прелестных детей? А вы, право, менее всех цените их и потому их не стоите.  
*(улыбаясь своею восторженною улыбкой.)*

**Prince Vasily:** Ah! I will be delighted to meet them.

*(With an air of carelessness, as if only just remembering something, when, in fact, that which he asked about was the main reason for his visit.)*

Tell me, is it true that l'impératrice-mère wants Baron Funke to be appointed first secretary in Vienna? C'est un pauvre sire, ce baron, à ce qu'il paraît.

*(Prince Vasily wanted to secure this post for his son, but others were trying, through the influence of Empress Maria Feodorovna, to have it granted to the Baron.)*

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer:** *(Almost closing her eyes, as a sign that neither she nor anyone else could judge what the Empress desired or was pleased with.)*

Monsieur le baron de Funke a été recommandé à l'impératrice-mère par sa soeur.

*(With a sad, dry tone. Her face suddenly presents a deep and sincere expression of devotion and respect, mixed with sadness, which appears every time she mentions in conversation her famous benefactor.)*

Her Majesty has seen fit to show Baron Funke beaucoup d'estime.

*(Again her gaze shows sadness.)*

*(Prince Vasily is indifferently silent.)*

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer:** (~~*With the womanly and courtly politeness that was her habit, wanting to reprimand him for daring to speak negatively of a person recommended by the Empress, and at the same time to comfort him.*~~)

Mais à propos de votre famille, connaissez-vous, que votre fille, dès qu'elle sort, fait les délices de tout le monde. On la trouve belle, comme le jour.

**(Prince Vasily bows as a sign of his respect and gratitude. Silence.)**

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer:** I often think  
(~~*Drawing near to the prince and smiling tenderly at him, as if showing by this that political and society conversations were over and that now was the time for intimate conversation.*~~)

I often think about how unfairly the happinesses of life are given out. Why has fate given you two such wonderful children? (Excluding Anatole, your youngest—I don't like him).

(~~*She speaks categorically, raising her eyebrows.*~~)

Two such delightful children? And you, it is true, value them less than anyone else, and thus you don't deserve them.

(~~*Smiling her ecstatic smile.*~~)

The sheer number of authorial remarks that are crossed out suggests the draw of the dramatic for Tolstoy in terms of hiding his authorial presence, but also indicates where this narrative principle breaks down: in the interpretation of gesture and dialogue. A spatial metaphor may better illustrate this textual situation: if the dialogue, the most immediate aspect of a script, occupies the downstage area, which is closest to the audience, and the stage directions detailing movements and tones, relegated to parentheses in a script, remain in the less immediate upstage area, then Tolstoy's inclusion of interiority in his stage directions takes readers to the forbidden backstage of the consciousness of his characters.

Lidiia Ginzburg has argued, however, that Tolstoyan dialogue is antidramatic, and that it does not carry any significance without the narrative commentary that explains it.<sup>218</sup> To support this claim she presents a conversation between Anna and Kitty in *Anna Karenina* with the surrounding narrative removed. I would suggest, however, as my script experiments indicate, that the problem for Tolstoy is precisely that dialogue is *too* meaningful and dangerously polyvalent for him to let it stand on its own.

Tolstoy's intrusion into a domain that should be occupied only by the reader or spectator of a drama can be further evidenced by the following illustration, a third variant of my experimental script, of what a more standard dramatic text would resemble. The blank spaces that I have added represent an open opportunity for the reader's interpretation after each element, whether verbal or gestural, of the script:

**Князь Василий:** А! Я очень рад буду. (...)

<sup>218</sup> Lidiia Ginzburg, *O psikhologicheskoi proze (On Psychological Prose)* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1971; 2<sup>d</sup> ed., Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1977), 375 (page reference is to first edition). Ginzburg's seminal work is available in an excellent English translation: Lydia Ginzburg, *On Psychological Prose*, trans. Judson Rosengrant (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

Скажите, правда, что l'impératrice-mère желает назначения барона Функе первым секретарем в Вену? C'est un pauvre sire, ce baron, à ce qu'il paraît. (...)

**Анна Павловна Шерер:** *(почти закрывая глаза) (...)*

Monsieur le baron de Funke a été recommandé à l'impératrice-mère par sa soeur. *(грустным, сухим тоном. Лицо ее вдруг представляет глубокое и искреннее выражение) (...)*

Ее величество изволила оказать барону Функе beaucoup d'estime. (...)

**Prince Vasily:** Ah! I will be delighted to meet them. (...)

Tell me, is it true that l'impératrice-mère wants Baron Funke to be appointed first secretary in Vienna? C'est un pauvre sire, ce baron, à ce qu'il paraît. (...)

**Anna Pavlovna Scherer:** *(Almost closing her eyes.) (...)*

Monsieur le baron de Funke a été recommandé à l'impératrice-mère par sa soeur. *(With a sad, dry tone. Her face suddenly presents a deep and sincere expression.) (...)*

Her Majesty has seen fit to show Baron Funke beaucoup d'estime. (...)

In contrast to the polyvalence of a dramatic text or performance, in *Voïna i mir* Tolstoy assigns meaning to almost every remark and gesture, usurping the authority of his readers to form their own conclusions. The effects of this means of characterization are quite serious, for they indicate Tolstoy's moral judgments of his characters, which also imply judgments of their ideologies, decisions, and political views. These are precisely the opinions which Tolstoy himself declared that he wanted to express to his readers. By interpreting his characters' speech and gestures, he can make this communication indirectly, without having to overwhelm his reader with lengthy diatribes.<sup>219</sup>

To mark the contrast between Tolstoy's use of gesture and dialogue in *Voïna i mir* and Turgenev's very different use of them in *Rudin*, I have performed the same script experiment on a section of Turgenev's text, discussed at length in Chapter 1 of this study. As with the script experiments above, I have only changed verbs from past to present tense and placed gestures in parentheses.<sup>220</sup> In this scene, guests have just arrived in Darya Mikhailovna's drawing room:

**Константин Диомидыч:** Александра Павловна велели вас благодарить и за особенное удовольствие себе поставляют.

*(Приятно раскланиваясь на все стороны и прикасаясь толстой, но белой ручкой с ногтями, остриженными треугольником, к превосходно причесанным волосам.)*

**Дарья Михайловна:** И Волынцев тоже будет?

**Константин Диомидыч:** И они-с.

<sup>219</sup> Of course, in later sections of the novel and most especially in the second epilogue, Tolstoy gives up on this nuanced method of communication and opts to state his historical and philosophical views directly.

<sup>220</sup> As we recall from Chapter 1, some of these statements of gesture are, in fact, already placed within parentheses in Turgenev's text.



**Дарья Михайловна:** Так как же, Африкан Семеныч (*Обратясь к Пигасову*) по-вашему, все барышни неестественны?

*(У Пигасова губы скрутились набок, и он нервно задержал локтем.)*

**Африкан Семеныч:** Я говорю (*неторопливым голосом -- он в самом сильном припадке ожесточения говорит медленно и отчетливо*) я говорю, что барышни вообще—о присутствующих, разумеется, я умалчиваю...

**Дарья Михайловна:** (*Перебивая его*) Но это не мешает вам и о них думать.

**Африкан Семеныч:** Я о них умалчиваю. Все барышни вообще неестественны в высшей степени -- неестественны в выражении чувств своих. Испугается ли, например, барышня, обрадуется ли чему или опечалится, она непременно сперва придаст телу своему какой-нибудь эдакий изящный изгиб (*и Пигасов пребезобразно выгибает свой стан и оттопырит руки*) и потом уж крикнет: ах! или засмеется, или заплачет. Мне, однако (*и тут Пигасов самодовольно улыбается*), удалось-таки добиться однажды истинного, неподдельного выражения ощущения от одной замечательно неестественной барышни!

**Дарья Михайловна:** Каким это образом?

*(Глаза Пигасова засверкают.)*

**Африкан Семеныч:** Я ее хватил в бок осиновым колом сзади. Она как взвизгнет, а я ей: браво! браво! Вот это голос природы, это был естественный крик. Вы и вперед всегда так поступайте.

*(Все в комнате смеются.)*<sup>221</sup>

**Konstantin Diomydich:** Alexandra Pavlovna asked me to thank you, and to say that they will be particularly delighted to come.

*(Pleasantly bowing to all and lightly touching his fat, but white hand with triangular cut nails to his superbly arranged hair)*

**Darya Mikhailovna:** And is Volyntsev coming?

**Konstantin Diomydich:** He is coming.

**Darya Mikhailovna:** So then, Afrikan Semyonich (*turning to Pigasov*) in your opinion all young ladies are affected?'

*(Pigasov's lips twisted to one side, and he nervously twitched his elbow.)*

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<sup>221</sup> The original scene can be found in I. S. Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v tridtsati tomakh* (*Complete Collected Works and Letters in Thirty Volumes*) (Moscow: Nauka, 1978-1986), 5: 212.

**Afrikan Semyonich:** I say (*in an unhurried voice—in his strongest fits of bitterness he always speaks slowly and precisely*) I say that ladies in general—about those present, of course, I am keeping silent...

**Darya Mikhailovna:** (*Interrupting him*) But that does not prevent you from thinking about them.

**Afrikan Semyonich:** I am keeping silent about them. All young ladies, in general, are affected in the highest degree—affected in the expression of their feelings. If a young lady is frightened, for instance, or if she rejoices in anything, or if she is sad, she will certainly first give her body some such elegant bend (*and Pigasov most outrageously bends his figure and sticks out his hands*) and then she will scream: ah! Or she will start to laugh or start to cry. Once, though, (*and here Pigasov smiles in a self-satisfied way*) I did succeed in drawing a genuine, unaffected expression of emotion from an extremely affected lady!

**Darya Mikhailovna:** How did you do it?

(*Pigasov's eyes sparkle.*)

**Afrikan Semyonich:** I poked her in the side with an aspen stake, from behind. She screamed, and I said to her, "Bravo, bravo! That was the voice of nature; that was an unaffected scream. You should always scream that way in the future!"

(*Everyone in the room laughs.*)

Turgenev, in contrast to Tolstoy, leaves gestures and dialogue conspicuously devoid of narrative interpretation; there is no interiority to cross out. Although Tolstoy had no use for Turgenev's dramatic mode of narration, interestingly enough, it appears that Tolstoy experimented with a dramatic form that included a novelistic narrative, very similar to my first script experiment, in the 1850s. Tolstoy employed this technique in the early drafts of *Svobodnaia liubov'* (*Free Love*, 1856), one of the dramatic sketches he was composing while working on the novel that was to become *Voyna i mir*. The text was structured as a drama, but annotated with authorial interpretations of the characters' interiority. In her study on Tolstoy as a dramatist, Elena Poliakova describes his method as follows:

Толстой подробно и неоднократно разрабатывает первые явления, затем снова охладевает к новой сценической форме, которая одновременно так привлекает писателя и так трудна для него. В прозе он раскрывает «диалектику души» своих персонажей через авторское слово, через непрерывный комментарий каждой их мысли и поступка. Отделенность сценических персонажей от автора, особенности драматического действия не даются прославленному автору «Детства.»<sup>222</sup>

<sup>222</sup> Elena Poliakova 23-24. Unfortunately, I do not have access to these early manuscripts of the play at this time; they are archived in the Lenin Library in Moscow. More recently, Donna Tussing Orwin posits that

Tolstoy would rework the first scenes repeatedly and in detail, and then again lose interest in the new scenic form, which attracted the writer and at the same time was so hard for him. In prose he revealed his characters' "dialectic of the soul" through his authorial voice, through constant commentary on their every thought and action. The separation of the stage characters from the author and the particularities of the dramatic form evade the famous author of *Childhood*.

Perhaps Tolstoy gave up on this form because he too found himself crossing out his revelations of characters' interiority in order to adhere to the dramatic format. It seems that Tolstoy has a deep distrust of his readers' interpretations, evidenced by his inability to silence his own authoritative voice and by his aversion to drama's multiple possibilities of interpretation.

Similarly to Ginzburg, Bakhtin also finds that the dramatic form is insufficient for Tolstoy's purposes, as it limits his authorial voice. In his foreword to a collection of Tolstoy's dramatic works he writes: "Дело в том, что драматическая форма была...глубоко не адекватна основным художественным устремлениям Толстого [...] Толстому важно это свободное и существенное повествовательное слово для осуществления своей авторской точки зрения, авторской оценки, авторского анализа, авторского суда, авторской проповеди" ("The fact of the matter is that the dramatic form was...profoundly inadequate to the principal artistic goals of Tolstoy [...] For Tolstoy a free and substantive narrative language is important for the realization of his authorial point of view, his authorial evaluations, his authorial analysis, his authorial judgment, his authorial sermonizing").<sup>223</sup> The dramatic form may not be suitable for Tolstoy as such, but its generic principles are highly useful to him when he uses them as a disguise for his authorial voice. He supplements the dramatic mode of narration, which predominantly features dialogue and gestures, with psychological novelistic technique, marked by penetration into the interiority of characters' consciousnesses. It is this technique for which Tolstoy is most well-known, as Lidia Ginzburg notes: "Толстой на практике отрицает эстетическую несовместимость изображения и рассуждения. Если реализм XIX века- искусство объясняющее, то величайший его выразитель Толстой объясняет открыто, уверенный в том, что его объяснение есть художественный факт. Без этого едва ли была возможна исследовательская настойчивость толстовского психологического анализа" ("Tolstoi in practice rejects the aesthetic incompatibility of description and analysis. If nineteenth-century realism is an explanatory art, then Tolstoi, its greatest exponent, explains openly, certain that his explanation is an artistic fact. Without this, the searching determination of Tolstoi's psychological analysis would hardly be possible.")<sup>224</sup> Using the two forms simultaneously allows Tolstoy a doubled authority, extending over the details of both

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Tolstoi's struggle to communicate clearly with his readers while hiding his authorial voice led him to seek "a prose form that could allow him to combine commentary with drama." Donna Tussing Orwin, *Consequences of Consciousness: Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

<sup>223</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, "Predislovie (Dramaticheskie proizvedeniia L. Tolstogo)" ("Foreword (Dramatic Works of L. Tolstoy)) in *Literaturno-Kriticheskie Stat'i (Literary-Critical Essays)* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1986), 90-91.

<sup>224</sup> Ginzburg 329.

exteriority and interiority; he has a very tight control over every gesture his characters make, but he does not have to relinquish control over his readers' interpretations. The opening pages of *Voina i mir* present a solution to the problem that Tolstoy encountered in writing *Svobodnaia liubov'*.

Tolstoy's indirect method of voicing his authorial judgments through interpreting dialogue and gesture is certainly less conspicuous than a philosophical or political diatribe, but is it effective in achieving its purpose? In fact, it often works against Tolstoy's intentions, leaving the reader with just enough of a hint of his authorial agenda to shatter the illusion of readerly autonomy that he is trying to create. There are some cases in which Tolstoy stretches the limits of his technique too far. Readers may become suspicious when gestures and facial expressions are afforded not only significance, but also speech. For instance, Kutuzov's smile and expression are given an entire statement: "И Кутузов улыбнулся с таким выражением, как будто он говорил: 'Вы имеете полное право не верить мне, и даже мне совершенно все равно, верите ли вы мне или нет, но вы не имеете повода сказать мне это. И в этом-то все дело'" ("And Kutuzov smiled with such an expression that it was as if he was saying, 'You are perfectly within your rights not to believe me, and it is even completely of no concern to me whether you believe me or not, but you do not have the grounds to tell me that. And that is the heart of the matter'") (9: 148). While this assertion is qualified by the phrase "as if" ("kak budto"), another interpretation of Kutuzov's smile appears only a few lines later, this time as a confident statement without any qualification: "Но Кутузов кротко улыбался, все с тем же выражением, которое говорило, что он имеет право предполагать это" ("But Kutuzov smiled meekly, still with that same expression that said that he had the right to make the supposition") (9: 148-9).<sup>225</sup> Perhaps one of the best-known examples of this mode of narration is the description of the dying Lise's face: "Я вас всех люблю, я никому зла не делала, за что я страдаю? помогите мне," говорило ее выражение" ("I love you all, and I have not done any evil to anyone; for what am I suffering? Help me," her expression was saying") (10: 39).<sup>226</sup> A facial expression can express an innumerable range of emotions and thoughts, but it is vital to Tolstoy that we read the body the same way that he does, that we see it only through his eyes. He does not trust the reader enough to leave an open space for interpretation, but instead fills in this gap with his (disguised) narrative voice.

A more extreme case is found in the description of an unnamed commander of the regiment at Branau: "его подрагивающая походка как будто говорила, что, кроме военных интересов, в душе его немалое место занимают и интересы общественного быта и женский пол" ("it was as if his staggered stride was saying that, besides his military interests, there was not a small place in his soul that was occupied with the

<sup>225</sup> Feuer makes much of these narrative qualifications, but I cannot agree either that this is the dominant method of introducing readings of gesture or that it succeeds in establishing Tolstoy's objectivity, as she suggests: "As for the author, his absolute neutrality is self-evident, for he has entirely stepped aside, and become the mere recorder of others' first-hand impressions" (127-8).

Morson discusses one gesture that remains ineffable, and there are indeed a few instances of this in the text, but I find that his conclusions are undermined by the fact that unreadable gestures are certainly more of an exception than a rule in Tolstoy's novel (84-86).

<sup>226</sup> Dmitrii Merezhkovskii discusses many of the repetitive physical features of Tolstoy's characters (whom he refers to as "действующие лица" ("dramatis personae")), which are used as markers of interiority. Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, *L. Tolstoi i Dostoevskii L. (Tolstoy and Dostoevsky)* (Moscow: Nauka, 2000), 92.

interests of social life and the female sex”) (9: 137). It appears presumptuous even for a great psychologist to use a character’s gait as a means of drawing conclusions about his social and romantic pursuits. Tolstoy’s contemporary, the critic Alexander Druzhinin expressed concern with this tendentiousness in his response to a manuscript of *Iunost’*. His 1856 letter to Tolstoy explains the problem as follows: “Есть у вас попопзновение к чрезмерной тонкости анализа, которая может разрастись в большой недостаток. Иногда вы готовы сказать: у такого-то ляжки показывали, что он желает путешествовать в Индии!” (“You have a tendency toward excessive detail of analysis, which may grow into a great flaw. Sometimes you are ready to say that someone’s thighs showed that he wanted to travel to India!”)<sup>227</sup> In spite of Druzhinin’s advice, Tolstoy uses this method of characterization with an overwhelming frequency in *Voyna i mir*. The leaps that he makes from the external to the internal are often marked with such linkages as “kak budto govoria” (“as if saying”), “v znak togo, chto” (“as a sign of”), “litso predstavilo” (“[his/her] face represented”), “vyrazhaia zhestom” (“expressing by a gesture”), “dvizheniem pokazyvaia” (“showing with a movement”). These linkages highlight Tolstoy’s attempt to keep his authorial voice under wraps, or at least more indirect, but they often only call readers’ attention to the fact that their interpretive autonomy has been stripped.

Tolstoy’s constant interpretation of gesture, whether offered as a qualified suggestion or reported as an objective observation, reflects an intense anxiety about the multiple interpretive possibilities of the visual. The very existence of the theater and the profession of acting testify to man’s ability to outwardly project an impression that may be the opposite of his true interior state. The indeterminate meaning of the body is simultaneously Tolstoy’s greatest tool and the greatest threat to his authorial agenda.

### **Theatrical Metaphors in the Novel**

Tolstoy is determined to shape his readers’ interpretations, and he offers several mirror images of this relationship in *Voyna i mir*: characters who perform the same controlling function over others. Paradoxically, Tolstoy’s judgment falls against these characters, while his sympathy lies with those who break free from the control of other characters. This conflict, a tension between Tolstoy’s relationship to his readers and his relationship to his characters, actually destabilizes the power he seeks to wield over his readers; the characters who free themselves from the control of others provide an unwitting model for readers, who may reject Tolstoy’s interpretations and form their own.

One prime example of this tension is found in Pierre’s experience in the drawing rooms of high society. There are several other characters who, while also performing their own prescribed roles, openly seek to control his behavior and speech, reminding him of the “script” to which he is expected to adhere. In the opening scene of the novel, Anna Pavlovna regulates Pierre’s conduct at her soirée by means of visual and verbal cues; for instance, one stern glance is enough to curb his political diatribe and bring him

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<sup>227</sup> Druzhinin’s letter, dated October 6, 1856, is cited by M. A. Tsiavlovskii in “Kommentarii: Istoriia pechataniiia ‘Iunosti’ v ‘Sovremennike’ 1857g” (“Commentary: The Publication History of ‘Youth’ in *The Contemporary*”) (2: 396-398).

into the general circle of conversation.<sup>228</sup> In a different setting, as the ceremonial Orthodox last rites are administered to his father, Count Bezukhov, Pierre is even more submissive, this time to the directions of Anna Mikhailovna Drubetskaia.<sup>229</sup> At a loss as to how to behave, Pierre, the estranged and illegitimate son, decides to completely commit himself to the cues of those around him:

Пьер, решившись во всем повиноваться своей руководительнице, направился к диванчику, который она ему указала [...] и решил про себя, что все это так именно должно быть и что ему в нынешний вечер, для того чтобы не потеряться и не надеть глупостей, не следует действовать по своим соображениям, а надобно предоставить себя вполне на волю тех, которые руководили им (9: 94).

Pierre, having decided to obey his directress in all things, moved toward the sofa she pointed out to him [...] and decided in his mind that this was all exactly as it should be and that tonight, in order not to lose himself or commit some stupid act, he could not act according to his own reason, but instead he needed to completely give himself over to the will of those who directed him.

Pierre's true emotions are fear and confusion, and yet, instead of expressing these emotions through his speech and actions, he takes on the role of the grieving son, breaking the link between his internal and external selves. This false role is not one that he can perform on his own, but one that is dictated by Anna Mikhailovna, who is also carefully crafting her own performance. In the last moments of his father's life, Pierre becomes increasingly dependent on the physical cues that are given to him by his "directress:"

Пьер остановился, не зная, что ему делать, и вопросительно оглянулся на свою руководительницу Анну Михайловну. Анна Михайловна сделала ему торопливый жест глазами, указывая на руку больного и губами посылая ей воздушный поцелуй. Пьер, старательно вытягивая шею, чтоб не зацепить за одеяло, исполнил ее совет и приложился к ширококостной и мясистой руке. Ни рука, ни один мускул лица графа не дрогнули. Пьер опять вопросительно посмотрел на Анну Михайловну, спрашивая теперь, что ему делать. Анна Михайловна глазами указала ему на кресло, стоявшее подле кровати. Пьер покорно стал садиться на кресло, глазами продолжая спрашивать, то ли он сделал, что нужно. Анна Михайловна одобрительно кивнула головой (9: 98-9).

<sup>228</sup> In Pierre it is possible to see a shadow of Tolstoi, who quieted his own political opinions in the early stages of writing his novel.

<sup>229</sup> Pierre's reaction to the ceremonial scene bears a striking resemblance to Natasha's when she gives in to the illusion of the opera. Natasha's thought ("Должно быть это так надобно!" ("Surely this is how it must be!")) (10: 325) is ascribed to Pierre almost word-for-word five times in this chapter, for instance: "Пьер ничего не понимал; опять ему еще сильнее показалось, что все это *так должно быть*, и он покорно последовал за Анною Михайловной, уже отворяющею дверь" ("Pierre did not understand anything; again it appeared to him even more strongly that *this was how all of this must be*, and he obediently followed after Anna Mikhailovna, who had already opened the door") (9: 92, emphasis mine).

Pierre stopped, not knowing what he was to do, and looked questioningly at his directress Anna Mikhailovna. Anna Mikhailovna gave him a hurried sign with her eyes, glancing at the hand of the sick man and sending him a kiss in the air with her lips. Pierre, stretching his neck carefully to avoid touching the blanket, followed her advice and pressed his lips against the large-boned and fleshy hand. Neither the hand nor a single muscle on the face of the prince moved. Pierre again looked questioningly at Anna Mikhailovna, asking what he was to do now. Anna Mikhailovna pointed out to him a chair that was near the bed. Pierre obediently began to sit down in the chair, continuing to ask with his eyes if he had done the right thing. Anna Mikhailovna nodded approvingly.

Anna Mikhailovna stands at the sidelines of the stage, giving literal cues to Pierre as he approaches his dying father. She quite literally performs the function of a prompter, an indispensable presence in classical theater. Despite being utterly unprepared for this performance, Pierre manages to play his role and succeeds in securing his father's inheritance.

Drawn into the world of high society, Pierre continues to submit to the control of others, nowhere more overwhelmingly, and almost comically, than in his "proposal" to Helene Kuragin. In this case it is her father, Prince Vasily, eager to secure Pierre's fortune for his daughter, who aids Pierre in his performance. Continuing the metaphor of physical control suggested by the stem of the word "*руководительница*" (the term is formed from two words: *рука*—hand, and *водит'*—to lead), Vasily's power over Pierre is also expressed in terms of the hand: "Пьер был у него *под рукою* в Москве [...] Со смерти графа Безухова он *не выпускал из рук Пьера*" ("Pierre was within his reach [literally, 'under his hand'] in Moscow [...] Since the death of Count Bezukhov he had not released Pierre from his side [literally, 'had not released Pierre from his hands']") (9: 243, 245). This image of the controlling hand reduces Pierre to nothing more than a marionette, manipulated by the control of his puppet master.

By Helene's name-day party Pierre has still not proposed, and Prince Vasily takes matters upon himself. Vasily proposes *for* Pierre, the clumsy actor who cannot manage to utter his lines; he smoothes over the lines Pierre has omitted, congratulating the awkward pair on their engagement, when Pierre has not proposed at all. After the "proposal" Pierre struggles to remember his "lines" and pronounces them, but without feeling:

"Что-то такое особенное говорят в этих случаях," думал он, но никак не мог вспомнить, что такое именно говорят в этих случаях [...] --Je vous aime!-- сказал он, вспомнив то, что нужно было говорить в этих случаях; но слова эти прозвучали так бедно, что ему стало стыдно за себя. (9: 259,260).

"There is something special that they say at moments like these," he thought, but he could not remember at all what specifically it was that they say at these moments [...] "Je vous aime!" he said, having remembered what he was supposed to say at such an moment, but the words sounded so poor that he became embarrassed of himself.

The artificiality of Pierre's words is highlighted by the repetition of the same phrase again and again. In a situation beyond his control, Pierre can only play the role prescribed for him, even though it does not reflect his true feelings.

Despite Pierre's pattern of submission to the scripts that are impressed upon him, Tolstoy does slowly bring his character to a state of autonomy. After his duel with Dolokhov, Pierre for the first time begins to perceive the artificiality of the roles he has been playing. In examining how he has been so led astray, Pierre identifies the pronunciation of his scripted lines as the beginning of his moral downfall:

ему живо представилась та минута после ужина у князя Василья, когда он сказал эти невыходившие из него слова: "Je vous aime". Все от этого! [...] -- Зачем я себя связал с нею, зачем я ей сказал этот: "Je vous aime", который был ложь и еще хуже чем ложь, говорил он сам себе [...] И повторив 10-й раз этот вопрос, ему пришло в голову Мольерово: *mais que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?* и он засмеялся сам над собою (10: 28, 29).

He vividly pictured that minute after dinner at Prince Vasily's, when he had said those words that had not come from his heart: "Je vous aime!" And look what had come of it! [...] "Why did I involve myself with her, why did I say that 'Je vous aime' to her? It was a lie, no, even worse than a lie," he said to himself [...] And after he had repeated this question for the tenth time, a line from Molière came into his head: "*mais que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?*" and he laughed at himself.

Perhaps it is this equation of himself with a character from a comedy that gives Pierre the strength to discard the role that has been prescribed for him by other characters.<sup>230</sup>

Although the incident in question is certainly not the first instance of his submission to the will of others, Pierre finds that the divide between his internal and external states is the beginning of his loss of his autonomy. Breaking this pattern for the first time, Pierre decides to leave his wife Helene and go to Petersburg. This independent move is the beginning step towards Pierre's growth as a character and his spiritual quest. The journey to autonomy is a major character development, but, paradoxically, it is not a journey Tolstoy wishes his reader to make.

Tolstoy also provides a counter-example to Pierre's attainment of autonomy; he shows no mercy to the character who strives to control everyone around him: Napoleon. Although Tolstoy eventually abandons the dramatic narration of the opening pages of *Voïna i mir* and embraces interior monologue and other authoritative narrative techniques, the relationship he is trying to forge with his reader remains the same. In later sections of the novel, Tolstoy begins to use theater and acting as metaphors, and they are frequently associated with Napoleon. Divesting the French Emperor of his presumed power, Tolstoy writes: "Наполеон [...] спокойно и достойно исполнял свою роль

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<sup>230</sup> This line comes from Molière's comedy *Les Fourberies de Scapin* (1671). The plot of this comedy bears some resemblance to the situation in Tolstoy's novel; Scapin uses his charm to control those around him, and his main concern is seeing to it that several young couples are happily married by the final curtain. Molière, *Oeuvres complètes*, (Paris: Editions Garnier Freres, 1962), 1: 582. I am very grateful to Anna Muza for calling my attention to this reference.



кажущегося начальствованья” (“Napoleon [...] calmly and worthily played his role of appearing to be the commander in chief”) (11: 221). The theatrical metaphor becomes more prevalent as the military campaign continues. Upon reaching Moscow, Napoleon begins to mentally compose his speech to the boyars, whom he expects to arrive at any moment to surrender the city to him. Napoleon’s authority, like Prince Vasily’s, is metaphorically associated with his hand: “Одно мое слово, одно движение моей руки, и погибла эта древняя столица des Czars” (“With one word from me, with one gesture of my hand, this ancient capital des Czars would be destroyed”) (11: 324). Unaware that the city is deserted, Napoleon continues to wait for the boyars, but fears that the moment he planned is losing its theatrical significance: “Между тем император, уставши от тщетного ожидания и своим актерским чутьем чувствуя, что величественная минута, продолжаясь слишком долго, начинает терять свою величественность, подал рукою знак” (“In the meantime the Emperor, having grown tired of waiting in vain and feeling with his actorly sense that the grand moment, having gone on for too long, was beginning to lose its grandness, gave the sign with his hand”) (11: 326.) Significantly, Tolstoy’s Napoleon sees himself as an actor, but also as a director of the men around him. This portrayal associates him with falsity, as well as treachery, and Tolstoy makes sure that he is not only defeated, but humiliated. Napoleon’s gesture with the hand, meant to reestablish his authority in such a compromising position, serves as a cue to his troops to move into a city that he does not yet know is abandoned. There will be no triumphant theatrical moment for Napoleon, for, as Tolstoy tells us: “Le coup de théâtre avait raté” (11: 329). Aside from reducing Napoleon’s plan from a coup d’état to a coup de théâtre, Tolstoy undermines Napoleon’s power on another level in the text. The term “coup de théâtre” is defined by *La Dictionnaire du Théâtre* as follows: “une action tout à fait imprévue changeant subitement la situation ou le déroulement de l’action... Il spéculer sur l’effet de surprise et permet, à l’occasion, de résoudre un conflit par une intervention extérieure.”<sup>231</sup> As this term is generally understood as a surprise for the audience, scripted into the play by the playwright, its function here is particularly significant. Napoleon planned his coup de théâtre to surprise Moscow, but he is instead served his own surprise and thus removed from the director’s chair to the audience as the drama of history unfolds.

Tolstoy’s ridicule of Napoleon’s sense of control over history aligns with his historiographic views as expressed in the second epilogue of *Voïna i mir*. The final stripping of Napoleon’s illusion of authority occurs in the first epilogue to the novel, as the defeated commander is retreating to France:

Человек этот нужен еще для оправдания последнего совокупного действия. Действие совершено. Последняя роль сыграна. Актеру велено раздеться и смыть сурьму и румяны: он больше не понадобится.  
И проходят несколько лет в том, что этот человек, в одиночестве на своем острове [...] показывает всему миру, что такое было то, что люди принимали за силу, когда невидимая рука водила им.  
Распорядитель, окончив драму и раздев актера, показал его нам.  
-- Смотрите, чему вы верили! Вот он! Видите ли вы теперь, что не он, а Я двигал вас? (12: 244-245)

<sup>231</sup> Patrice Pavis, *La Dictionnaire du Théâtre*, 1980, s.v. “coup de théâtre.”

This person is needed for the justification of the last whole act. The act is completed. The final role has been played. The actor is ordered to take off his costume and wash away his hair dye and rouge: he is no longer needed.

And there will come several years during which this person, in isolation on his island [...] will show the world what exactly what it was that people took for a powerful force, when it was really an unseen force that led him.

The master of ceremonies, having completed the drama and sent the actor to remove his costume, has shown him to us.

“Look what you believed in! Here he is! Do you see now that it was not he, but I who set you in motion?”

Here Tolstoy makes clear what he has been suggesting throughout his narration of the war. Although Napoleon believes himself to be the playwright of the “theater of war,” in reality he is a mere actor, controlled by the hand of a more powerful playwright, which the capitalized “Я” (“I”) suggests is God. This divine dramatist brings the play to a close and reveals its main actor as a fraud. Tolstoy’s depiction is the mirror image of his depiction of Pierre: the character who breaks free from the control of others is applauded, while the character who seeks unlimited control over all those around him is humiliated and defeated.

This explicit metaphor of the theater, intensifying toward the end of the novel, seems to be a somewhat dangerous move for Tolstoy. The reader is likely to perceive a thinly-veiled parallel of authority; just as God is the “*распорядитель*” (“master of ceremonies”) of history, so Tolstoy is the “*распорядитель*” of his text, controlling not only his characters, but also his readers.<sup>232</sup> Tolstoy attempts to extend his authority beyond the borders of the text; through his constant interpretation of the significance of his text he has, in a metaphorical sense, staged our response to it.

There is, however, one model of a reader, however unwitting she may be, within the text of *Voyna i mir* who can serve as an example to readers who wish to draw their own conclusions. This is, of course, Natasha Rostova, whose visit to the opera is treated by Viktor Shklovsky in his essay “*Iskusstvo kak priem*” (“Art as Device,” 1925) as a prime example of *ostranenie* (defamiliarization). Natasha entirely fails to comprehend theatrical convention; instead of seeing the unified whole of the operatic performance, Natasha sees its disjointed and non-illusory parts, such as the waxed floorboards, the costumes, and the manipulation of lighting to create the impression of night. These elements, taken individually, appear more puzzling than dramatic to the young debutante:

Она не могла следить за ходом оперы, не могла даже слышать музыку: она видела только крашенные картоны и странно-наряженных мужчин и женщин, при ярком свете странно двигавшихся, говоривших и певших; она знала, что все это должно было представлять, но все это было так вычурно-фальшиво и ненатурально, что ей становилось то совестно за актеров, то смешно на них (10: 324).

She could not follow the course of the opera and could not even hear the music: she saw only the painted cardboard cutouts and the strangely dressed men and

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<sup>232</sup> The root of the word is “poriadok,” meaning “order,” and it literally means one who gives order to things.

women, moving strangely in a bright light, speaking and singing; she knew what all of this was supposed to represent, but it was all so ornately false and unnatural that she became ashamed for the actors and found them ridiculous at the same time.

Natasha sees the opera stripped to its bare components, not as a unified aesthetic whole, but as a conglomeration of oddities that she can only interpret as false. It is almost as if Natasha is viewing the performance as a detailed script, in which she notes the carefully delineated functions of the prompter, the set designers, the lighting technicians, and the actors, rather than seeing what these stage conventions are meant to represent. Through Natasha's eyes, the sets, costumes, gestures, and arias of the opera are divested of their intended meaning, the very meaning which, in fact, only the spectators of the opera can ascribe to it.<sup>233</sup> Natasha has broken the contract between the theater and its audience, and she stands in stark contrast to the rest of the spectators:

Она оглядывалась вокруг себя, на лица зрителей, отыскивая в них то же чувство насмешки и недоумения, которое было в ней; но все лица были внимательны к тому, что происходило на сцене и выражали притворное, как казалось Наташе, восхищение (10: 324-5).

She looked around her at the faces of the spectators, searching them for that same feeling of mockery and bewilderment that she herself felt; but all of the faces were attentive to what was happening on the stage, and they expressed feigned, as it seemed to Natasha, delight.

The falsity that Natasha sees stretches beyond the stage and into the audience, as Tolstoy employs the common depiction of the theater as a space where the spectators are also actors. Julie Buckler suggests that it is actually Tolstoy's narrative voice that leads the *reader* to see the opera in this estranged fashion and to reject it as false.<sup>234</sup> In this case, Tolstoy's text is yet again working against its author's intentions. The reader is encouraged to follow Natasha's lead by finding the opera a paragon of falsity, and yet the same reader, Tolstoy hopes, will remain duped by the cardboard figures of his text, the ones he uses to hide his authorial judgments. Like the opera, Tolstoy's text is also a work of art that can be broken down into its component parts; this is precisely the function of the script experiments above, which show us Tolstoy's attempts to hide his voice behind the words and gestures of his characters. Unlike Natasha, the reader is not meant to understand that her interpretation is being manipulated.

How effective is Tolstoy's attempt to shape his readers' interpretations without their knowledge? Despite his best efforts, it does not seem that he achieved his goal. The explicit presence of the theater in the novel, as a space and as a metaphor, can serve to draw the reader's attention to the dramatic elements that Tolstoy employs in the opening

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<sup>233</sup> It is nonetheless true that Natasha can only be our model for a short time; her defamiliarized view of the opera is quickly replaced by submission to its conventions, and she is rather painfully disabused of the notion that her real life bears any resemblance to this theatrical performance through her affair with Anatole.

<sup>234</sup> Julie Buckler, *The Literary Lorgnette: Attending Opera in Imperial Russia* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2000), 95-97.

pages of the novel, the bounds of which he constantly oversteps. Tolstoy's attempt to reap the benefits of the dramatic format while overcoming its limitations results in a text that often undermines his intentions. Furthermore, some of his characters offer inspiration for subversive reading and interpretation. Pierre provides a model of breaking free from the scripts that are imposed upon him and the influence of the people who want to control him. On the opposite side of the spectrum, Tolstoy's description of a divine upstaging of Napoleon as playwright hints at the fact that Tolstoy performs a similar function in relation to his characters as well as to his readers, and that he too may be subject to such an upstaging. Finally, Natasha provides a model of rejecting the intended effect of a text in favor of breaking it down into its constituent components, an act which creates the possibility of new readings, ones not necessarily condoned by the author. To use Tolstoy's own metaphor of control, we can free ourselves from the influence of the hand that created the text, and it even seems that he has given us the keys to do so.

Despite Tolstoy's deep ambivalence about drama as an artistic form, it holds a central place in *Voyna i mir*. Boris Eikhenbaum, one of the most distinguished of Tolstoy scholars, found that drama played a larger part in the text than had previously been recognized. In December 1941, only a few months into the devastating blockade of Leningrad, Eikhenbaum was interviewed about his latest project: the adaptation of *Voyna i mir* for the stage. Although the play was never performed, due to the evacuation of the theater at the end of the winter, Eikhenbaum's comments about the work are quite provocative:

Это не инсценировка, а работа совсем иного и нового типа, иного масштаба, иного идейного, общественного и художественного значения. Созданный театром сценический вариант, помимо всего другого, обнаруживает драматургическую сущность или основу в композиции «Войны и мира», которой до сих пор не замечали и не учитывали, воспринимая роман Толстого произведением исключительно эпическим, повествовательным [... работа над спектаклем] заставляет заново поставить или пересмотреть вопрос о драматургии Толстого вообще- не только о его пьесах, но и о его драматургических принципах и возможностях, частично осуществленных в романах.<sup>235</sup>

It is not a dramatization, but work of a completely different and new type, of a different scale, of a different ideational, social, and artistic meaning. The dramatic version produced by the theater, apart from everything else, reveals the dramatic essence or foundation in the composition of *War and Peace*, which up until now has not been noticed or taken into account, as Tolstoy's novel has been perceived exclusively as an epic or narrative work [... Work on the play] compels us to reconsider and to pose again the question of Tolstoy's dramaturgy in general—not only of his plays, but also of his dramatic principles and resources, which are

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<sup>235</sup> Aleksandr Rubashkin, *Golos Leningrada: Leningradskoe radio v dni blokady (The Voice of Leningrad: Leningrad Radio in the Days of the Blockade)* (St. Petersburg: Zhurnal-Neva, 2005), 79. The play was to be staged at Teatr imeni Leninskogo komsomola (Theater of Lenin's Komsmol) under the direction of M. Chezhegov. The novel was eventually staged as an opera (with music by Prokofiev) by the Bol'shoi Theater in 1959. On this and subsequent stagings of *Voyna i mir*, see Elena Poliakova, *Teatr L'va Tolstogo (The Theater of Leo Tolstoy)* (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1978), 399-341. I am very grateful to Irina Paperno for calling Eikhenbaum's adaptation to my attention.

partially realized in his novels.

Like the writer whose work he discusses, Eikhenbaum also defines his work negatively, as something greater than a dramatization. His comments suggest that there is something profoundly dramatic about the construction of the text, which only fully emerges upon actually transforming it from prose into a dramatic format. Unfortunately, the circumstances of the blockade interrupted Eikhenbaum's line of inquiry into this aspect of *Voyna i mir*, but even his preliminary remarks make a very pertinent contribution to the ongoing debate over the work's generic status. Although my script experiments are conducted for a very different purpose, I believe they powerfully illustrate the dynamic that Eikhenbaum describes and uncover the dramatic skeleton of Tolstoy's novel.

### Concluding Remarks

Revisiting the issues of gesture and interiority in Tolstoy's *Voyna i mir* illuminates a significant development in the use of drama as a structuring device in the mid-nineteenth-century Russian novel. In the mid-1850s, Russian writers were struggling to produce a novel; Turgenev had not yet developed an authoritative third-person narrative voice, Goncharov did not know how to effectively begin his novel and stitch the different parts of it together, and Dostoevsky turned to figures from the popular theater to craft his central characters. The difficulties of beginning and sustaining their novels led these authors to turn to drama for inspiration, in terms of narrative and plot structure, construction of space, and character formation. By the time Tolstoy began composing *Voyna i mir* in earnest, in the early 1860s, he had the same difficulty beginning his work, but for entirely different reasons. Unlike Turgenev, Tolstoy had a strong handle on his narrative voice; the problem was that he needed to hide it. Although in later sections of the text, Tolstoy gave free rein to his authorial judgments and proclamations, the opening pages of *Voyna i mir* form a unique moment in the mid-nineteenth-century Russian novel, one in which the use of drama is not foregrounded, as before, but rather placed under disguise.

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