Multiplicity and Metaform:
Late Russian Romanticism as Literary Laboratory

by

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Professor Harsha Ram
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Abstract

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This dissertation traces the development of new literary forms in Russia between the failure of the Decembrist uprising in 1825 and the ascendancy of proto-realism in the 1840s. I argue that this period of intense experimentation with literary form—"form" here understood broadly, as encompassing genre, device, and mode—was motivated by the late Romantics' desire to expand literature's capacity for embodiment, to push past material form's perceived limits to represent nonmaterial, ideal truths. I trace the aesthetic strategies devised to reconcile with and/or provide alternatives to inherited Romantic dualisms (not only materiality/ideality, but also presence/absence, wholeness/fragmentation, self/non-self) in texts of key prose writers of the 1830s – Vladimir Odoevskii, Nikolai Gogol, and Mikhail Lermontov. Central to each of these three writers' experimental approach to form is their sense of *lateness*, of engaging in literary creation at the temporal boundary line between Romanticism and an as-yet undefined future epoch in Russian letters.

I demonstrate that all three writers employ metafictive interarts devices—what I call "metaforms"—that draw on the realms of painting, music, and theatrical performance to encode new formal possibilities in their texts. The three chapters examine major prose cycles and collections—Odoevskii's *Russian Nights* [*Russkie nochi*] (1844), Gogol's *Arabesques* [*Arabeski*] (1835) and *Dead Souls* [*Mertvye dushi*] (1842), and Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* [*Geroi nashego vremeni*] (1840)—alongside a range of theoretical texts central to Romantic aesthetics in Russia and Germany, including works by Vissarion Belinskii, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and Friedrich Schiller. While my analysis is grounded in close reading and literary theory, I also draw on art history, theater and performance studies, and music criticism to demonstrate that the Russian late Romantics consistently appealed to non-literary artforms to organize or inspire their own literary experiments.

Resisting the realist teleology dominant in Slavic studies to this day, my dissertation redescribes the 1830s and 40s, not as merely "transitional," but rather as a distinct moment whose formal innovations lie outside standard accounts of either Romanticism or realism.

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I'd like to dedicate this dissertation to my brother Nathan Pribble, who loved stories.

Наконец, – называйте это суеверием, чем вам угодно, – но я знаю по опыту, что невозможно приказать себе писать то или другое, так или иначе; мысль мне является нежданно, самопроизвольно и, наконец, начинает мучить меня, разрастаясь беспрестанно в материальную форму, – этот момент психологического процесса я хотел выразить в Пиранези, и потому он первый акт в моей психологической драме…

Finally, – call it superstition, whatever you like, – but I know from experience that it is impossible to command yourself to write this or that, one way or the other; a thought comes to me unexpectedly, spontaneously, and finally begins to torment me, growing incessantly into material form – it is this moment in the psychological process that I wanted to express in Piranesi, and for that reason he is the first act in my psychological drama…

Letter from Vladimir Odoevskii to Andrei Kraevskii, October 1844[1]

INTRODUCTION

I. Imaginary Prisons

In an 1844 letter to Andrei Kraevskii about his recently published cycle *Russian Nights* [*Russkie nochi*], Vladimir Odoevskii characterizes the process of artistic creation as a long and tormenting struggle to embody a thought in material form.[2] Inspiration lies outside the control of the artist, who, at the mercy of his own imagination, must wait for an idea to strike before slowly helping it find its way into expression. In *Russian Nights* the figure for this laborious process is a madman: Odoevskii represents the artist's "psychological process" in the deranged eccentric who, in the Third Night, professes himself to be the 18th-century draughtsman Giovanni Battista Piranesi. This representation suggests a troubling analogy between creative inspiration and the delusions of insanity. As Odoevskii indicates in his letter to Kraevskii, it is fitting that this madman should imagine himself to be Piranesi, an artist most famous for his drawings of impossible prisons.

Piranesi's sketches appealed to many Romantic writers, who perceived in his haunting labyrinths a perfect image of the artist held captive by his own art. In a semi-ekphrastic account of the *Carceri d'invenzione* [*Imaginary Prisons*] (ca. 1750) in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821), Thomas De Quincey imagines following the captive Piranesi through the

[1] V.F. Odoevskii, "Pis'mo A.A. Kraevskomu 1844 goda," *Literaturnye pamiatniki: Russkie nochi* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975), pp. 234-236. Translation mine.

[2] Odoevskii is responding in this letter to Vissarion Belinskii's critical appraisal of his stories in a recent edition of the thick journal *Notes of the Fatherland* [*Otechestvennye zapiski*], published by Kraevskii.

labyrinthian structure of his own etchings.[3] This description of the *Carceri* is an analogue for De Quincey's opium-induced dreams and, by extension, for the byzantine structure of his own autobiographical writings. J. Hillis Miller identifies the "Piranesi effect" as a central emblem for De Quincey's art: "Versions of the Piranesi effect have been noted at crucial moments of De Quincey's experience […] The motif is most dramatic when it is a repetition which seems to sink deeper and deeper into infinity, as deep opens beneath deep. Infinity is a mere abstract idea. The Piranesi effect bodies it forth and gives it a palpable form."[4] For many Romantics Piranesi epitomized the creative imagination tormented by unrealizable artistic concepts. While Piranesi himself was able to express his visions in compelling etchings of architectural structures, the fantastic nature of these edifices confines them to the realm of print and ink; it would be impossible to realize them in mortar and stone. Paradoxically, this very unrealizability renders Piranesi's *Carceri* the ideal emblem for the Romantics' struggle to navigate the infinite expanses of the imagination and channel abstract ideas into external expression, to "body forth" these ideas and grant them "palpable form." That these infinite imaginings are figured as a series of prisons is significant. The *Carceri* suggest that the artist's expansive vision is always destined to collide with—to be imprisoned by—certain limits, including the limits of subjectivity, materiality, and location in a particular historical moment.

It is characteristic that this moment of apparent ekphrasis in De Quincey's *Confessions* is based not on the *Carceri* themselves, but on De Quincey's memory of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's description of the drawings. "I describe only from memory of Mr. Coleridge's account," De Quincey admits. The form that De Quincey adopts as an emblem—Piranesi's nightmare prisons—is thus refracted through multiple imaginative stages. Originating in the mind of the draughtsman, the labyrinth finds partial expression in the medium of etching, where infinite abysses and impossible geometries underscore the edifice's unrealizability as an actual architectural structure. The image of the fantastical labyrinth is then conveyed to De Quincey through Coleridge's description; the memory of this description serves as the basis for De Quincey's own literary reimagining of Piranesi's infinite hallways. De Quincey's passage, which adopts the *Carceri* as a pessimistic symbol for the Romantic imagination, thus transforms Piranesi's original artwork just as Piranesi's etchings transform De Quincey's "abstract idea" by granting that idea form and structure.[5]

This complex interarts exchange raises the precise questions which, I argue, occupy the Russian late Romantic writers at the center of this dissertation. Is a material art object—a painting, a literary text, a musical score—capable of representing abstract, i.e., nonmaterial truths? If so, then which artform is best suited for this task of expressing the inexpressible, of

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[3] De Quincey writes, "Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi, you suppose at least that his labours must in some way terminate here. But raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher, on which again Piranesi is perceived, but this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Again elevate your eye, and a still more aerial flight of stairs is beheld, and again is poor Piranesi busy on his aspiring labours; and so on, until the unfinished stairs and Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall. With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams." See De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and Other Writings* (Oxford UP, 2013), p. 70.

[4] Joseph Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* (Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois Press, 1963), p. 67.

[5] For an extended reading of the function of the "Piranesi effect" in De Quincey's autobiographical writings, see Curtis Perry, "Piranesi's Prison: Thomas De Quincey and the Failure of Autobiography" in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1993, pp. 809-24. Perry identifies multiple organizational models—"imaginative structures" that impose order on the confessing subject's autobiography—in *Confessions*, including architecture and addiction.

embodying the unembodied? Why does Odoevskii—a philosopher, writer, and music critic—turn, like De Quincey, to a series of architectural etchings as the perfect emblem for the Romantic writer's struggle to break free from the prison of his own imagination, to reconcile infinite imagined potentialities with the confining limits of materiality? What is a drawing of a prison able to capture that a literary description cannot—and vice versa? And finally, can literature, through ekphrastic description or by adopting other interarts strategies, claim some of the affordances of the competing artform for itself?

This dissertation investigates the ways in which major prose works of Russia's late Romantic period pose and attempt to work through these questions about artistic embodiment. Ultimately, I argue that the 1830s and 40s in Russia was an era of intense formal experimentation motivated by the desire to embody, through art, the unembodiable. Odoevskii's *Russian Nights*, Nikolai Gogol's *Arabesques* [*Arabeski*] and *Dead Souls* [*Mertvye dushi*], and Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* [*Geroi nashego vremeni*]—all of these texts represent distinct formal innovations that draw on non-literary artworks to confront the seemingly impossible task of channeling abstract thought into comprehensible externalized forms.

II. Lateness

At the center of this dissertation's inquiry is my assertion that Russian literary culture of the 1830s and early 1840s is everywhere underwritten by a self-conscious impulse to develop or discover new literary forms.[6] I argue that this impulse is motivated, first and foremost, by a pervasive sense of epochal lateness. Odoevskii, Gogol, and Lermontov can all be considered writers of the *late* Romantic period.[7] In the Russian context, this means that they were most productive in the era following the Decembrist revolt and the aesthetic preeminence of the

[6] Drawing on New Formalist definitions of "form," I use the term to encompass genre (lyric, tale, novel), mode (poetry or prose), and device (the frame narrative, the philosophical dialogue). Caroline Levine's definition of "form" in *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton UP, 2015) is helpfully capacious: "'form' always indicates *an arrangement of elements—an ordering, patterning, or shaping* […] Form, for our purposes, will mean all shapes and configurations, all ordering principles, all patterns of repetition and difference" (p. 3).

[7] In this way, my dissertation takes as its point of departure accounts of Russian literary history during the period of late Romanticism and early realism proposed by scholars such as Boris Eikhenbaum, Viktor Shklovskii, Lydiia Ginzburg, Donald Fanger, and, more recently, Melissa Frazier and Victoria Somoff. Broadly speaking, critics tend to theorize this period in terms of one of two major evolutionary trends: first, the turn towards a more "philosophical" Romanticism, what Iurii Mann refers to as "shiroko[e] filosofsko[e] dvizhenie 20-40kh godov" (see Mann, *Russkaia filosofskaia estetika* [Moskva: MALP, 1998], p. 13); and, secondly, in terms of the development of narrative prose on its way to the "rise of the Russian novel." The first of these interpretations looks backward to Romantic aesthetics; the second looks forward, to the seemingly inevitable appearance of the realist novel of the 1860s and 70s. In claiming that the works of "romantic realism" transfer Romanticism's dualistic worldview into a recognizable, "everyday" urban milieu, Fanger, for instance, develops an account of the 1830s and 40s that foregrounds the realist novel as endpoint (Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol* (1965) [Northwestern UP, 1998]). In *O lirike*, Ginzburg identifies a crisis in literature following the dissolution of the "school of harmonious precision" [*shkola garmonicheskoi tochnosti*] in the 1820s: this crisis is answered by the "poetry of thought" [*poeziia mysli*], a mode of philosophical lyric that evolves from the early, largely unsuccessful attempts of the Wisdom-Lovers, particularly Venevitinov, Khomiakov, and Shevyrev, to "translate their theoretical thought into poetic thought" (translation mine), to the successful meditative lyrics of Baratynskii and Tiutchev. Ginzburg suggests that this development of the philosophical lyric represents one side of the "coup" that was achieved in literary form in the 1830s; the other side led to the development of new prose forms. See Ginzburg, *O lirike* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1974). For a further discussion of the "crisis" in Russian poetry in the 1820s and the new "meditative" lyric forms that emerged in the 30s, see the Introduction to Sarah Pratt's *Russian Metaphysical Romanticism: The Poetry of Tiutchev and Boratynskii* (Stanford UP: 1984).

Arzamas generation, at a time when Romanticism proper was already perceived as having come to an end.

This shift into Russian Romanticism's late period was accompanied by a feeling that new forms were needed in literature. The civic Romanticism of the 1820s, with its dominant genres of the elegy, the epigram, the friendly epistle [*druzheskoe poslanie*], and the sublime or romantic ode[8], could not long outlive the failure of the Decembrist uprising. The lyric fragment appeared outmoded by the early 1830s: Pushkin, the greatest practitioner of Russian "fragmentariness,"[9] famously began to distance himself from poetry in favor of prose writing, publishing the narrative cycle *The Tales of the Late Ivan Petrovich Belkin* [*Povesti pokoinogo Ivana Petrovicha Belkina*] in 1831. Byronism was publicly laid to rest with the 1832 publication of Lermontov's "No, I am not Byron, I am Another" [Net, ia ne Bairon, ia drugoi]. A few years later, Baratynskii lamented the "dispersed Pleiad" [Zvezda razroznennoi pleiady!] of the Arzamas generation, the early Romantics of the 1810s-20s, in his lyric "To Prince Piotr Andreevich Viazemskii" [Kniaziu Petru Andreevichu Viazemskomu] (1836), the dedicatory poem in his *Twilight* [*Sumerki*] cycle. Meanwhile, in the realm of criticism, Belinsky proclaimed in 1835 that Russia "had no literature" [U nas net literatury][10], while other journalists and editors looked to the rising profitability of the publishing industry as evidence that Russian literary culture was entering a new phase, one that was to be dominated by popular prose narratives marketed for a broader reading public.[11]

The literary texts at the center of this dissertation thus fall into the first of Ben Hutchinson's two major categories of epochal lateness: that is, "the sense of coming just after a particularly powerful era."[12] This feeling of "lateness," of having arrived too late on the literary

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[8] Harsha Ram has analyzed the persistence of "many of the *formal* trappings of the odic sublime" in the Decembrist poetry of W.K. Kuchelbecker, K.F. Ryleev, and A.S. Pushkin. See Ram, *The Imperial Sublime* (Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin Press, 2003), especially Chapter 3: "Sublime Dissent."

[9] Monika Greenleaf observes that, "As the 1820's progressed, the epithet 'fragmentary' followed Pushkin persistently." Greenleaf argues that, by the end of the 20's, Pushkin's characteristic "fragmentariness" had begun to frustrate, rather than delight, his audience. See Greenleaf, *Pushkin and Romantic Fashion: Fragment, Elegy, Orient, Irony* (Stanford UP, 1997), pp. 2-3.

[10] In "Literaturnye mechtaniia" [Literary Dreams] (1834-1835), a ten-part critical article published in Nadezhdin's *Molva*, Belinskii divides Russian literature into four periods, each defined by one or two central authors: the "Lomonosov period," whose major poets were Lomonosov and Derzhavin; the "Karamzin period," whose primary poets included Karamzin, Zhukovskii, and Batiushkov; the "Pushkin period," which came to an end after the publication of *Boris Godunov*; and the current "prosaic-national period," which in 1835 still lacked a central figure. See V.G. Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1948), Vol. 1, pp. 7-89.

[11] This optimism led Nikolai Grech to announce in 1832 that the opening of Aleksandr Smirdin's new lending library and bookstore on Nevskii Avenue heralded Russian literature's movement "out of the basements and into the palaces" (qtd. in George Gutsche, "Dinner at Smirdin's: Forces in Russian Print Culture in the Early Reign of Nicholas I," *The Space of the Book: Print Culture in the Russian Social Imagination*, ed. Miranda Remnek [U of Toronto Press, 2011]). Melissa Frazier offers a particularly nuanced account of the growth of popular publications in *Romantic Encounters: Writers, Readers, and the "Library for Reading"* (Stanford UP, 2007). Frazier complicates the standard narrative that attributes the "crass commercialization of Russian literature" to Osip Senkovskii, the editor of the highly profitable *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, by suggesting that Senkovskii's journal in fact represents an apotheosis of Romantic poetics (p. 15).

[12] See Hutchinson, *Lateness and Modern European Literature* (Oxford UP, 2016), p. 13. Hutchinson's monograph on lateness and late style argues that modernity is characterized by a pervasive sense of lateness that has its roots in post-Goethean German Romanticism. Of particular importance for my reading of this period of Russian Romanticism as self-consciously "late" is Hutchinson's claim that late periods are marked by a heightened and self-aware concern with literary history, a concern that arose alongside and in dialogue with the philosophy of history in

scene, contributed directly to the experimental approaches to form taken by Odoevskii (in his works of the 1830s and 40s)[13], Gogol, and Lermontov. The major texts analyzed in this dissertation engage in a sustained critique of early / high Romantic aesthetic categories such as fragmentation and philosophical dualism (Odoevskii), absence (Gogol), and Romantic subjectivity (Lermontov). I argue that these critiques are present on the level of literary form as well as content, and that they shape the form and structure of these texts in ways which have not previously been accounted for in scholarship.

In characterizing these texts as fundamentally "late" and thus as invested in rethinking earlier Romantic paradigms, I am not suggesting that they attempt to "overcome" or "move beyond" Romanticism. Accounts of Russian literary history of this period—generally speaking, from the end of high Romanticism to the ascendancy of the Russian realist tradition—often read the 1830s and 40s in more or less teleological terms, as marking literature's "evolution" from Romanticism to realism. Resisting this tendency to read the realist novel backwards onto late Romantic texts, as the inevitable endpoint toward which they gesture, I theorize the period as one defined by a series of deeply self-reflexive experiments in the realm of literary form, experiments which have in common two structural tendencies: 1) an organization founded on *multiplicity*: nearly all of the texts I examine take the form of a cycle [*tsikl*], compilation [*sbornik*], or collection [*sobranie*]; and 2) the incorporation of a central metafictive structure borrowed from the realm of the visual, musical, or theatrical arts in an effort to unify and model their own complex creation.

III. Multiplicity as Literary Laboratory

A central feature of these late Romantic texts is that they have all been read as fundamentally fragmented, miscellaneous, or otherwise characterized by structural multiplicity. This might be a multiplicity of genre (the five central tales that make up *A Hero of Our Time* belong to five distinct genres; *Dead Souls* is both a novel and an epic; *Arabesques* includes an essay on universal history alongside three short stories and a chapter from an unwritten novel); multiplicity of narrative voice (there are three narrators in *A Hero of Our Time* and more than a dozen in *Russian Nights*); or even a multiplicity of potential frame narratives – many of the individual stories that make up these cycles were published separately in thick journals or intended for other collections before they made their way into the final text.[14] These works thus

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German Idealism: "A culture of lateness predisposed the age not only to historical stock-taking, but also to theorizing about the very nature of the relationship between literature and history, a relationship predicated on a heightened self-consciousness regarding questions of historical precedence" (p. 7). Hutchinson's characterization of the "epistemology of lateness" as "always linked to the attempt—if at times only implicit and potential—to regenerate itself, to make cultural virtue out of contingent necessity by transforming lateness into earliness" is also important, inasmuch as the writers with whom my dissertation is concerned at times hesitated between seeing themselves as the last Russian Romantics, and as the first pioneers of a new, as yet unformed, literary style (p. 13).

[13] Odoevskii was an active participant in Russian intellectual life during Romanticism's early period, establishing himself "at the forefront" of cultural circles in 1822-25 (see Neil Cornwell, *The life, times and milieu of V.F. Odoevsky (1804-1869)* [Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1986], p. 8). However, the literary texts for which he is most well-known were written in the 30s and 40s. *Russian Nights* figures the rupture between the "early" and "late" stages of Odoevskii's own career as a dialogue between a representative of the older Romantic generation—a participant in the circles of the 20s—and the new intellectual generation of the 1840s.

[14] Gogol's "The Portrait" [Portret], for example, was most likely intended for two other prose collections before finally finding its way into *Arabesques*. The first was a three-part almanac titled *Troichatka*, which Odoevskii conceived in 1833 as a collaboration with Pushkin and Gogol. The project never came to fruition. However, S.A.

level an interpretive challenge at readers: to figure out what unites the apparent miscellany, what overarching theme or purpose justifies their inclusion within a single prose cycle – or indeed, whether such a unifying purpose exists at all.

Scholarship on the mixed-genre collections and prose cycles of the 1830s-40s tends to follow one of two general interpretive trends. The first tendency, originating with the Russian Formalists, reads these cycles as symptomatic of a pervasive impulse toward novelistic discourse. Boris Eikhenbaum and Viktor Shklovskii claim that cyclical organization is the natural precursor to the novel, a steppingstone on the path to narrative unity.[15] More recently, Victoria Somoff has analyzed the shorter prose forms of the 1820s-50s—the *povest'*, the frame narrative, and the cycle of tales—as "back roads and byways […] toward novelistic discourse […] deeming the novel—the novel in prose—a touchstone for Russian literature's aesthetic prospects."[16] Somoff argues that prose cycles like *A Hero of Our Time*, Pushkin's *Tales of Belkin*, Odoevskii's *Russian Nights* and *Motley Tales* [*Pestrye skazki*] (1833), and Gogol's *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka* [*Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki*] (1831) facilitate the emergence of the "collector of tales" as a narrative persona who prefigures the novel's omniscient narrator. She characterizes these variegated and cyclical texts as experiments through which "the novelistic authorial position was first discovered in Russian prose."[17] I follow Somoff in viewing the texts at the center of this dissertation as literary experiments, or "laboratories," for working out new prose forms.[18] It is also undeniable that the novel was one possible endpoint toward which writers in the 1830s and 40s were working as they constructed these literary experiments.[19] Of the texts analyzed in this dissertation, this is especially true of *A Hero of Our*

Fomichev draws on extensive draft evidence to argue that "The Portrait," Odoevskii's "Princess Mimi," and Pushkin's "The Queen of Spades" are the three stories in question. See S.A. Fomichev, *Prazdnik zhizni: Etiudy o Pushkine* (SPB: Nauka, 1995), pp. 194-208. More recently, N.E. Genina has echoed and extended Fomichev's claims in her article "'Ne dozhidaites' Belkina…': Nerealizovannaia 'Troichatka' A.S. Pushkina, N.V. Gogolia, V.F. Odoevskogo," *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, No.333 (April 2010). The second unrealized collection for which "The Portrait" may have been intended was Gogol's planned cycle of artist's tales titled *Moonlight through a broken attic window on Vasilevskii Island* [*Lunnyi svet v razbitom okoshke cherdaka na Vasil'evskom ostrove*]. In 1835 Gogol settled on *Arabesques* as the appropriate frame for the story, though he remained dissatisfied. He produced a heavily revised version of the tale—which excises most of the story's fantastic elements—in 1842.

[15] See Eikhenbaum, "Geroi nashego vremeni," in *Stat'i o Lermontove* (Moscow and Leningrad: Izd. AN SSSR, 1961), pp. 221-265. In this essay Eikhenbaum argues that "Toward the middle of the 1830s it became clear that the primary path to the creation of the new Russian novel lay through the cyclization of minor forms and genres" (translation mine). See also Viktor Shklovskii, *Razvertyvanie siuzheta* (*Sborniki po teorii poeticheskogo iazyka*), Petrograd: Opoyaz, 1921. Shklovskii writes, "The predecessor of the modern novel was the collection of short stories" (p. 15, translation mine), though he adds that this is a claim of "chronological fact" rather than direct "causal necessity." Victoria Somoff discusses Shklovskii's analysis in detail in chapter 2 of *The Imperative of Reliability*. See also the collection of essays on Russian prose of the first quarter of the 19th century edited and published by Eikhenbaum and Iurii Tynianov in 1924: *Russkaia proza* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963).

[16] Victoria Somoff, *The Imperative of Reliability: Russian Prose on the Eve of the Novel, 1820s-1850s* (Northwestern UP, 2015), p. 4.

[17] ibid., p. 8

[18] Richard Freeborn similarly refers to the early Russian novel—in which category he includes *Evgenii Onegin* and *A Hero of Our Time*—as "a virtually experimental form." See *The Rise of the Russian Novel: Studies in the Russian Novel from 'Eugene Onegin' to 'War and Peace'* (Cambridge UP, 1973), p. 1.

[19] Many writers—including those, like Evgenii Baratynskii, who were and continue to be best known for their lyric poetry—professed a desire to write a novel in the 1830s. Baratynskii references his intentions to write a novel on multiple occasions in his letters to Ivan Kireevskii throughout the 1830s (see, for example, Baratynskii's letters to Kireevskii from July–August 1831), and in a letter to his mother in 1842 outlines his plan to write a "novel in the

Time, which is explicitly preoccupied with its generic status vis-à-vis the novel. However, I argue that the novel is only one possible form toward which these texts aspire, and that many of these experiments gesture toward alternative formal possibilities not yet treated in literary scholarship on the period.

While Somoff, following the Formalists, sees the prose cycle as a "back road" to narrative unity, Melissa Frazier reads these cyclical structures as an extension of Romanticism's preoccupation with the fragment. Looking backwards to Jena and the *Athenaeum*, Frazier suggests that Gogol's 1835 collection *Arabesques* reveals a (perhaps unconscious) impulse to manifest, through a series of interrelated but fragmentary texts, the ideal Romantic genre proposed by Friedrich Schlegel in "Letter on the Novel" (1800)—a genre that allows philosophy and art, poetry and criticism, to co-exist as parts of a sublime whole.[20] The *Athenaeum* project's influence on Russian Romanticism began receiving scholarly attention in the early 1990s, in the wake of deconstruction and the work of its exponents in Romanticism studies. This scholarship has tended to focus on the ascendancy of the genre of the Romantic fragment in Russia and its attendant linguistic skepticism. My project builds upon but also complicates the claim that the ideas of the *Frühromantik* persist in the philosophical Romanticism of 1830s Russia. I read key texts of the period both alongside and *against* the genre of the fragment, locating moments in these texts that attempt to enact presence or completion, overcoming absence and fragmentation.

Frazier's historical gaze, oriented toward Jena, informs her reading of the prose collection (and, in *Romantic Encounters: Writers, Readers, and the "Library for Reading,"* of the literary journals of the 1830s[21]) as an extension of the project of Romantic aesthetics; Somoff, looking ahead to the novel, reads the cycles of the 30s as containing within themselves the seeds of novelistic unity. Rather than suggesting that these texts *foreshadow* the novel or *backshadow* the Romantic fragment (by appearing as the culmination of a particular strain in Romantic poetics), this dissertation proposes an alternate vision of the 1830s and 40s as a unique period of intense, open-ended formal experimentation motivated by the desire to embody, through art, the unembodiable; as well as a tendency to appeal to artforms other than literature for inspiration in the development of new aesthetic forms that would facilitate this act of literary embodiment.

Often this experimental approach to literature involved reworking and restaging the same motif or philosophical problem across multiple drafts, narratives, and textual variants. This process allowed late Romantic prose writers to try out multiple forms for the content they sought to embody. To use the terminology favored by two of my writers—Odoevskii and Gogol—this proliferation of variants allowed the writer to experiment with different *expressions* [*vyrazheniia*] for the *thought* [*mysl'*] they sought to express. As Odoevskii explains to Kraevskii in the epigraph to this Introduction, the creative process by which a thought "grows incessantly into material form" is always an arduous one. The four short stories about artists in *Russian*

Balzacian genre" [roman v zhanre Bal'zaka]. See E. Kupreianova, "Baratynskii tridtsatykh godov," in *Baratynskii E.A. Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii v 2 tomakh*, Vol.1 (Leningrad: Sov. pisatel', 1936). Pushkin, meanwhile, confessed to Vladimir Dal' in 1832 that he had started three separate novels but lacked the patience to finish them, though he desperately wanted to complete a longer prose work. See Eikhenbaum, "Put' Pushkina k proze," in *O proze, o poezii: Sbornik statei* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969), pp. 214-30.

[20] Frazier writes, "whether or how Gogol might have learned of Schlegelian aesthetics remains unclear. Still, something in Gogol's imagination has a decidedly Schlegelian cast of countenance, as in Schlegel's thought, and particularly in that thought as expressed in *Dialogue on Poetry*, the arabesque *is* a literary genre, one which in fact bears a strong resemblance to *Arabesques*." See Melissa Frazier, *Frames of the Imagination: Gogol's 'Arabesques' and the Romantic Question of Genre* (Peter Lang, Inc., 2000), p. 5.

[21] See Frazier, *Romantic Encounters: Writers, Readers, and the "Library for Reading"* (Stanford UP: 2007)

Nights all stage the same basic philosophical-aesthetic problem (What is artistic inspiration, and how is it distinguished from madness?). All four were originally intended for an unrealized cycle titled *The Madhouse* [*Dom sumasshedshikh*] and were then published separately in various almanacs and journals. There, the other tales, verses, and illustrations included in the respective publications necessarily altered the artistic impact of Odoevskii's stories, making them a part of the overarching form of the journal. Finally, the four stories were incorporated into *Russian Nights*, where a frame narrative in the guise of a philosophical dialogue that occurs over nine nights cast them in yet another form. Odoevskii thus experimented with multiple narratives, multiple heroes (an engraver, an improvisor, and two musical composers), multiple drafts, and multiple framing devices in an effort to represent a particular idea: that the boundary line between inspiration and madness is always tenuous. In a similar way Lermontov conceived many versions of his central hero, Pechorin, over the course of many years, casting him variously in the guise of a dramatic hero, the protagonist of the proto-realist novel *Princess Ligovskaia*, and finally, the familiar diarist of *A Hero of Our Time*.

Ultimately, I read the multiplicity at the heart of these late Romantic texts as a manifestation of the writers' probing, exploratory approach to the problem of artistic embodiment, i.e., the question of how the material form of an art object can be made commensurate with the thought behind it despite perceived limitations to material form. This multiplicity is countered by a competing impulse to model unity. This secondary impulse is realized via a series of interarts emblems that these texts adopt as figure for their own longed-after form.

IV. Fragment & Metaform

The perceived gap between thought (*mysl'*) and expression (*vyrazhenie*) that haunted many of the late Romantics has its basis in Romantic aesthetics. It is grounded in the broader dualisms (spirit and matter; the ideal and the real) of philosophical idealism, whose privileged genre is the fragment. A sense of frustrated longing for the unity of absolute being is fundamental to the Romantic project, as is the proposition that language, including artistic language, is only ever an approximate and imprecise medium for conveying thought. The fragment, then, becomes "the romantic genre *par excellence*," as it incarnates Romanticism's eternally thwarted desire for completion.[22] In other words, the fragment is a stand-in for the perpetually absent ideal work, of which it claims to be a part.[23]

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[22] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute* (1978), trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 40. C.f. Friedrich Schlegel's famous aphorism: "Many of the works of the ancients have become fragments. Many modern works are fragments as soon as they are written" (*Athenaeum* fragment 24, 1798), in Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis, MN and London: U of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 21.

[23] For the definitive discussion of the fragment as a Romantic genre, see Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy read the *Athenaeum Fragments* and *Critical Fragments* of Friedrich Schlegel and the Jena romantics (ca. 1797-1800) within the context of German philosophical idealism and post-Kantian thought. They argue that the literary fragment indicates a never-to-be-completed process ("the *immediate* projection of what it nonetheless incompletes," pp. 42-43) rather than a completed product; nevertheless, each individual fragment can also be seen as whole in itself (see the famous *Athenaeum* fragment 206, which posits that a fragment must be "complete in itself like a hedgehog"). As such, the fragment comes closest of all genres to bridging the gap between the real and the ideal that haunts Romanticism. Nevertheless, the fragment is ultimately only ever a stand-in for the desired absolute Work. In a passage that finds its echo in later Gogol scholarship examining the role of absence in Gogol's texts, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy write, "The work in this [absolute] sense is absent from

I argue that the late Romantic works analyzed in this dissertation rely on a particular type of metaliterary device that is related to but distinct from the fragment. An artform other than literature—painting, music, or dramatic performance—is represented within the text and comes to function as a self-referential metaphor, giving expression to the idealized form(s) toward which the text itself aspires. This device encodes the unrealized or alternative potentialities of the text while also making those potentialities appear real and present. This category of secondary art object, which I refer to as a "metaform," is adopted by the text as an emblem for itself because it is seen as a more successful means than verbal art for embodying presence. These metaforms are partially constituted by their relation to the fragment, and yet are also opposed to the fragment in important ways. The metaform aims to suspend the reader's imagination and delimit interpretive possibilities, exercising monologic authority, while the fragment opens up interpretation and inspires the reader to engage in a co-creative exchange with the text. In addition, the temporality of the metaform is that of the *moment*: the truth it conveys is singular and eternal and is therefore made perceptible instantaneously; by contrast, the fragment, by making truth negotiable, leaves open the possibility of endless debate and variation.[24] Finally, the metaform and the fragment have different relations to the whole. While the fragment is fundamentally incomplete and inspires desire for the missing whole, the metaform contains within itself, in miniature, the whole of the sought form; it forestalls desire.

The impulse to locate formal or structural models in artforms other than literature is rooted in Romantic aesthetic theory's preoccupation with the concept of the "sister arts." Thinkers in both the German and Russian Romantic traditions were concerned with the interrelation of the sister arts – broadly speaking, the differing forms and affordances of music, literature, and the visual and plastic arts, particularly painting, sculpture, and architecture. Following theorizations of the sister arts proposed by pre-Romantic thinkers such as Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing—the latter's classic *Laokoon* (1766)

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works—and fragmentation is *also* always the sign of this absence. But this sign is at least ambivalent, according to the constant logic of this type of thought, whose model is negative theology. The empty place that a garland of fragments surrounds is a precise drawing of the contours of the Work. It suffices to take one further step—which consists in thinking that the Work as work, as organon and individual, is given, precisely, in its form—to understand simultaneously that the Work is, beyond all 'isolated' art, work of art, and that the 'system of fragments' (*A* 77) is a precise drawing, using the traits of its fragmentary configuration, of the contours of the Work of art, which are no doubt external but nonetheless its own *contours*, its absolute Physiognomy" (pp. 46-47). For a consideration of the 19th-century economic and cultural contexts within which the Romantic fragment poem emerged as the epoch's quintessential form, see Marjorie Levinson, *The Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of a Form* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 1986). For an examination of the fragment's legacy in Russia, see Monika Greenleaf, *Pushkin and Romantic Fashion: Fragment, Elegy, Orient, Irony*, pp. 19-55. Greenleaf situates Russian Romanticism within the broader trajectory of the Romantic project established by the Schlegel brothers and, later, Byron.

[24] The question of the metaform's temporal dimension vis-à-vis the fragment is complex and will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Two. The fragment, too, involves an element of instantaneousness, which both Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy and Greenleaf, following Schlegel, associate with the immediacy of a "flash of wit," or *Witz*. Greenleaf writes, "The flash of wit and the lyrical fragment are analogous artifacts" (p. 48). Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy note that "*Witz* is concerned with the fragment, first of all, in that both of these 'genres' […] imply the 'sudden idea' (*Einfall*, the idea that suddenly 'falls' upon you, so that the find is less found than received) […] because 'many witty sudden ideas' [*witzige Einfalle*] are like the sudden meeting of two friendly thoughts after a long separation,' *Witz* seems to imply within itself the entire fragmentary, dialogical, and dialectical structure that we have outlined. The essence of the 'sudden idea' consists in its being a synthesis of thoughts" (p. 52). While the linking of the fragment to *Witz* attributes a sense of the momentary and the instantaneous to fragmentation, Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy's emphasis on "dialogue" and "meeting" (two thoughts coming together, not the sudden appearance of one) underscores the fundamentally communicative and co-creative aspect of the fragment, which requires an exchange to come into being.

famously defines the vital difference between verbal and visual representation in terms of a divide between temporality and spatiality—Romantic aestheticians sought to articulate a hierarchy of the different artforms.[25] This hierarchy often took the form of a stadial and teleological categorization of the sister arts according to their place in the development of human history.[26]

In Russia, such hierarchies were proposed in a series of essays throughout the 1820s. These include Odoevskii's "An Essay in the Theory of the Fine Arts" ["Opyt teorii iziashchnykh iskusstv"] (1823-1825); Alexander Galich's "An Essay in the Science of the Beautiful" ["Opyt nauki iziashchnogo"] (1825); Dmitri Venevitinov's "Analysis of an Article on Evgenii Onegin" ["Razbor stat'i o Evgenii Onegine"] (1825) and "Sculpture, Painting, and Music" ["Skul'ptura, zhivopis' i muzyka"] (1827); and Gogol's "Sculpture, Painting, and Music" (included in *Arabesques*). All of these essays construct a narrative of historical progress that moves from the plastic forms of antiquity to the ideal art of the Christian era, which is most often associated with music. Vladimir Odoevskii, for example, writes in "An Essay in the Theory of the Fine Arts" that painting affects its audience in a way that is immediate, material, and relatively superficial, while music penetrates the interior of our souls, an idea taken directly from German aesthetics.[27] Galich, meanwhile, sees the novel as the highest manifestation of Romantic art, while Venevitinov reserves that place for drama.[28]

By the 1830s, Russian writers and critics could draw on an established interest in evaluating the boundary lines between the different artforms, as well as in assessing the competing affordances of the visual, verbal, and musical arts. Many writers, Odoevskii and Gogol among them, constructed theoretical hierarchies which judged each artform according to its ability to embody the longed-for synthesis of the ideal and the real, or to approximate in

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[25] For an overview of this genre's history, see Herbert Lindenberger, "Literature and the Other Arts," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 5, ed. Marshall Brown (Cambridge UP: 2007), pp. 362-386. Lindenberger traces the history of the treatise on various artforms to Alexander Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1750-58), the text that gave its name to the emerging philosophical field of aesthetics. In Germany these treatises were often part of a larger philosophical system, as in the case of Schelling and Hegel.

[26] In tracing this historical trajectory, theorists like Friedrich Schlegel hoped to posit a new "Romantic" genre that would serve as the *telos* of this historical model. Such a genre would overcome previous generic divisions while providing a means of aesthetic reintegration of matter and spirit. It was this search for a Romantic genre that led to the Jena Romantics' valorization of the poetic fragment. As the finite analogue of the ideal artwork, the fragment comes closest of all aesthetic forms to bodying forth transcendence.

[27] The idea that music is the most perfect of the artforms is especially prevalent in the aesthetic theory of Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, whose *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden klosterbruders* [*Outpourings of an Art-Loving Monk*] (1797) was translated into Russian by the Moscow Romantics (Venevitinov, Odoevskii, Shevyrev, Titov) in 1826. Vasilii Gippius argues that "The Russian Romantics of the 1820s who were grouped around *The Moscow Herald* […] were closer to Wackenroder's version of Romanticism than to Schelling's […] In architecture, as in music, they saw pure idea, unconditioned by any proximity to nature." See V.V. Gippius, *Gogol'*, trans. Robert Maguire (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1989), pp. 42-45. Galich, a devoted follower of Schelling and one of the first to bring Schelling's philosophy to Russia, was an exception; like Schelling, Galich desired a unification of the infinite (spirituality) and the finite (plasticity). For a pivotal discussion of the privileging of music in Romantic aesthetics, see M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (Oxford UP: 1971), pp. 88-94.

[28] In an 1825 letter to Aleksandr Koshelev, Venevitinov posits a historical dialectic—a structure that he took from A.W. Schlegel, whose work he greatly admired—according to which history's "first epoch," characterized by objectivity and represented in epic poetry, has been superseded by the present "second epoch," characterized by subjectivity and represented in lyric poetry; the future "third epoch" will see a synthesis of objectivity and subjectivity, epic and lyric, in dramatic art. See D.V. Venevitinov, "Pis'mo A.I. Koshelevu 1825 goda," *Stikhotvoreniia. Proza. Seriia 'Literaturnye pamiatniki'* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980). For a detailed overview of the aesthetic treatises produced in Russia in the 1820s, see Mann, pp. 21-30.

material form the experience of spiritual transcendence.[29] It is of course important not to overstate the influence of these theoretical treatises: they reached a relatively small readership, and, unlike their German predecessors, were not rigorously grounded in broader philosophical discourse, such a discourse not yet having appeared in Russia in the 1820s. However, they show that there was a clear and sustained interest in the theoretical relationship between the artforms among the late Romantic writers, and that both Gogol and Odoevskii contemplated the ways in which literature exceeded and / or fell short of the potential of the plastic and musical arts to embody the ideal. For Lermontov, as Chapter Three will show, of particular importance were theoretical considerations of tragedy and of the relationship between drama as literary script and drama as embodied performance.

Ultimately, I argue that this broad conceptual concern with the capacity for embodiment possessed by the different artforms informed the creation of unique aesthetic devices in the late Russian Romantic period. These devices, or metaforms, exist in a productive tension with the pervasive multiplicity of the texts they emblematize. In the space between form and metaform, new aesthetic possibilities are suggested.

V. Overview

In one sense, the chapters in this dissertation proceed along non-chronological lines. The major texts analyzed in Chapters One, Two, and Three were published in 1844 (*Russian Nights*), 1842 (*Dead Souls*), and 1840 (*A Hero of Our Time*), respectively. The reverse chronological order is intended to destabilize received models of progression according to which formal innovation in the 40s led inexorably toward the novel. Instead, I characterize this period as open-ended and not predetermined in its creative experimentation. At the same time, a broadly chronological progression inheres in the advancement of intellectual and / or philosophical concerns motivating these three writers. Odoevskii's firm intellectual grounding in the early Romanticism of the 1820s gives way, in Chapter Two, to Gogol's idiosyncratic combination of Eastern Orthodox and dilettante philosophical-aesthetic concerns in the mid-1830s. The dissertation concludes with Lermontov's exploration of selfhood, which is free of explicit engagement with early Romantic philosophy. My chapters thus chart two simultaneous narratives, one chronological, the other reverse chronological. The first belongs to the sphere of intellectual history; the second, to literary history (i.e., the reconstruction of the development of literary forms). The tension between these two chronologies underscores the complex relationship that exists between each of these fundamentally late texts and its position in the Russian literary tradition.

In Chapter One, "Harmony, Fragment, Frame: Inhabiting Dualities in Odoevskii's *Russian Nights*," I argue that Odoevskii's prose cycle uses the genre of the Romantic artist's tale (*Künstlerroman*) to repeatedly stage the problem of philosophical dualism in an effort to finally reconcile with Romantic binaries. Rather than seeking a synthesis of dualisms—the dream of the Romantics of the 1820s—the 1844 cycle casts an ambivalent look back at Russia's early Romantic period while learning to inhabit these dualisms comfortably. I argue that Odoevskii interrogates his own position as a practitioner of *late* Romantic literature by engaging in an interarts metacommentary that considers and finally discards a series of solutions to the cycle's

[29] It must be acknowledged that Odoevskii's approach was, characteristically, considerably more theoretically sound than Gogol's.

central dichotomy, that of thought (*mysl'*) vs. expression (*vyrazhenie*). These discarded solutions are framed as the product of the Idealist-inflected aesthetic thought of the 1820s. The 1844 cycle shatters the dualistic premise of the individual *Künstlerromane* to produce a more ambivalent vision of aesthetic inspiration, one that is informed by the musical principles of counterpoint and harmony. "Lateness" thus becomes the grounds for the genesis of a new prose style.

Each of the four artist's tales in *Russian Nights* features a non-literary art-object—architectural design; improvisational oral poetry; musical composition—in order to model the potential held by various forms of material expression for embodying abstract thought. I demonstrate that each story considers this fundamental artistic problem of thought vs. expression as it is informed by a secondary set of binary axes. These secondary binaries are 1) solipsism (or an excess of inward thought) vs. spontaneity (an excess of outward expression); 2) transhistoricism vs. historical periodization; and 3) madness vs. genius. Put more simply, these stories ask whether inspiration is inwardly or outwardly derived; whether it is transhistorical or subject to historical progress and change; and whether the line between madness and creative genius can ever be firmly drawn. I suggest that each story presents a different argument about the place that creation occupies along each of these binary axes. What is established as provisionally "true" about the creative process in one story is countered by the example of art given in another. It is only by considering all four stories together along with the philosophical dialogue in the frame narrative that the pattern of central binaries emerges. This contrapuntal structure allows the cycle as a whole to inhabit these dualities without ever needing to synthesize or overcome them. In *Russian Nights*, then, Odoevskii takes inspiration from musical composition to construct a late Romantic form capable of accommodating duality.

Chapter Two, "The Unrealized Text: Word and Image in Gogol's 'Sister Arts' Stories," analyzes the role that the visual arts play in Gogol's *oeuvre* between 1835 and his death in 1852. I examine Gogol's valorization of the representational capacities of portraiture and history painting in the short works "The Portrait" (1835) and "Rome" [Rim] (1842). Animated by a conflict that emerges in these two narratives between the qualities that Gogol attributes to the painted image (atemporality, presentness) and those attributed to the literary text (temporality, open-endedness), these stories betray Gogol's attempt to wrest narrative into a form that might afford the same representational possibilities as the image. Behind both of these real texts stand unrealized works that, I argue, would have more fully achieved the aspirational forms borrowed from painting: the proposed collection of *Künstlerromane* titled *Moonlight through a broken attic window on Vasilevskii Island*, and *Annunziata*, the unwritten novel of which "Rome" purports to be a fragment.

These readings lay the groundwork for my final and most polemical argument, that in Gogol's magnum opus *Dead Souls* (1842) and its infamously unfinished second volume, the conflict between image and word is sublimated into a broader tension between space and time. With reference to Gogol's two theoretical essays on large-scale historical paintings ("The Last Day of Pompeii" [Poslednii den' Pompei] and "The Historical Painter Ivanov" [Istoricheskii zhivopisets Ivanov]), I suggest that by the early 1840s Gogol's aesthetic ideal had evolved into the "significant moment" of history painting. Unlike the literary fragment, which in its incompleteness *gestures toward* the unattainable whole without ever giving the reader a full sense of what that whole looks like, the significant *instant* captured by the painter's brush already contains the whole within itself. I read the structural tensions of *Dead Souls*—in particular, the novel's disorienting alteration between static and dynamic modes—as

symptomatic of Gogol's unrealized desire to maneuver his narrative into a form that would, in future volumes, offer a literary equivalent to the "significant moment" of history painting. Departing from post-structuralist interpretations of absence in Gogol as an achievement of Romantic art, I argue that Gogol, as a *late* Romantic, was more interested in plenitude than lack, and that he felt the perpetual absence of the longed-for form—in the unrealized *Künstlerromane* collection, in *Annunziata*, and in the missing volumes of *Dead Souls*—as a failure. This central claim informs my chapter's commitment to reconstructing the unwritten texts toward which the painterly metaforms gesture.

Chapter Three, "Embodying the Tragic Hero in Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*," analyzes Lermontov's appeals to theater, i.e., the embodied enactment of a written drama, as an aesthetic model while he worked "backward" from the narrative unity of his unfinished novel *Princess Ligovskaia* to the more disjointed form of the Romantic collection in *A Hero of Our Time*. Reading the Pechorin of *Hero* alongside earlier incarnations of the same basic character in *Princess Ligovskaia* and Lermontov's two mature plays of the 1830s, *Masquerade* [*Maskarad*] (1835) and *Two Brothers* [*Dva brata*] (1836), I chart Lermontov's experiments in locating the right genre and form in which to embody his hero. While it is standard practice to read the fragmentary mixed-genre form of *A Hero of Our Time* as an example of the Romantic collection of tales serving as a transitional link between the short story and the novel, I read the text instead as an experiment in negotiating between the forms of dramatic performance and literary narrative in order to work out an original representation of selfhood.

Focusing on "Princess Mary," the section of the cycle that emerged directly out of *Princess Ligovskaia* and *Two Brothers*, I trace the novel's simultaneous appeals to two seemingly opposed modes for representing the self. The first is the diary form, a traditionally private genre which posits the self as stable and knowable, and which claims to give voice to authentic feelings. The second is dramatic theater, which in the mid-19th century was understood as a public artform that presented a series of performative selves and which viewed the individual (who might play different roles) as an inherently unstable entity. I argue that in "Princess Mary," Pechorin himself scripts and stages a drama in the spa town of Piatigorsk, using the other society members—including the titular Princess Mary and her would-be paramour Grushnitskii—as unwitting actors in a five-act tragedy of his own devising. He "scripts" each act of this tragedy in his diary and then manipulates those around him into playing out the scenes he has created, while also casting himself in the role of the drama's Romantic hero. The hero is thus split into three: Pechorin-the-dramatic-hero (the role that Pechorin creates for himself in the drama he is scripting), Pechorin-for-himself (Pechorin the diarist and "dramatist"), and Pechorin-the-novelistic-hero (the character that Lermontov is writing). A full image of Pechorin is only glimpsed in the spaces between the distinct modes that make up "Princess Mary": between the playwright-director, the actor-character, and the diarist. Writing in the late 1830s, Lermontov draws on early Romantic forms like the fate tragedy to develop an experimental model for conceptualizing selfhood.

Musical counterpoint; the painted image; the performativity of dramatic theater – these non-literary artforms offered the writers I examine alternative models for literary creation at a time when established Romantic forms were perceived as obsolete. This dissertation lays bare the ways in which major prose works of the 1830s and 40s rely on these interarts models and emblems—metaforms—to organize or inspire their own variegated form. What emerges is an

impression of this period in Russian literary history as highly experimental, characterized by writers who drew on their own lateness as a catalyst for the creation of new styles.

CHAPTER ONE

Harmony, Fragment, Frame: Inhabiting Dualities in Odoevskii's *Russian Nights*

I. Introduction and Philosophical Context

Dualities lie at the root of Romantic thinking. Broadly speaking, the Romantic philosophical project as it emerged in and around Tübingen and Jena at the turn of the 19th century posits dualism as the precondition for modernity. Modern subjectivity is constituted by the dichotomous interrelation of body and spirit, subject and object, thought and expression, whole and part, which emerge when the onset of consciousness ruptures Absolute being—when the "state of innocence" or "golden age" of mankind invoked by Schiller is irrevocably lost.[30] In more recent accounts of philosophical Romanticism, Helmut Schneider has characterized the Romantic project as a yearning for lost unity, "the incessant and unremitting search for the lost encompassing whole,"[31] while Dalia Nassar posits that Romantic philosophy seeks above all to identify that metaphysical and epistemological Absolute which is the originary source of three key modern binaries: mind and nature; the one and the many; and the infinite and the finite.[32]

A version of this story is told in the Eighth Night of Vladimir Odoevskii's 1844 cycle *Russian Nights* [*Russkie nochi*]. The Eighth Night—of nine consecutive nights over which the cycle takes place—is devoted to an embedded tale about the life of Johann Sebastian Bach. A fictional organ-maker named Johann Albrecht, who mentors the young Sebastian, delivers a series of pronouncements on music, art, and religion. In a key passage on the spiritual history of mankind, Albrecht tells Sebastian,

> 'There were times […] from which not a sound, not a word, not a trace is left: mankind had no need of *expression* then. Peacefully it rested in its innocent cradle, and in its carefree dreams it understood God and nature, the present and the future. But then…the infant's cradle shook: a tender being, unfledged, like a butterfly in its scarcely opened cocoon, was confronted with stern and inquisitive nature. In vain did youthful Alcides strive to chain nature's huge and varied forms in his childlike babble. With its head, nature touched the world of ideas; with its heel, the coarse instinct of crystals, and it challenged the man to measure up to its strength. It was then that the two constant and eternal but also dangerous and treacherous allies of the man's soul were born: *thought* and *expression*.' (175)[33]

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[30] Schiller outlines his conception of the "golden age of mankind" most clearly in "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry" (1795-1796). For Schiller, modern or "sentimental" poetry takes its aesthetic power from its revelation of the tension between the real—the modern experience of fragmentation—and the ideal—the state of innocence or lost totality that formed the basis of ancient Greek reality. Due primarily to the mediating influence of Zhukovskii, whose 1811 article *O poezii drevnikh i novykh* was largely inspired by Schiller's essay on the naïve and sentimental, the idea of Romantic poetry as reflecting the modern separation of man and nature had already permeated Romantic thought in Russia by the early 1820s.

[31] See Schneider, "Nature," in the *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 5 "Romanticism," ed. Marshall Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), p. 94.

[32] See the introduction to *The Romantic Absolute: Being and Knowing in Early German Romantic Philosophy, 1795-1804* (U of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 1-14.

[33] All English translations are from Olga Koshansky-Oleinikov and Ralph E. Matlaw, *Russian Nights* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1997). Citations to this text will appear parenthetically by page number.

> ‘Было время […] от которого нам не осталось ни звука, ни слова, ни очерка: тогда *выражение* было не нужно человечеству; сладко покоилось оно в невинной, младенческой колыбели и в беспечных снах понимало и бога и природу, настоящее и будущее. Но…всколыхалась колыбель младенца; нежному, неоперенному, как мотыльку в едва раздавшейся личинке, предстала природа грозная, вопрошающая: тщетно юный алкид хотел в свой младенческий лепет заковать ее огромные, разнообразные формы; она коснулась главою мира идей, пятою – грубого инстинкта кристаллов, и вызвала человека сравниться с собою. Тогда родились два постоянные, вечные, но опасные, вероломные союзника души человека: *мысль* и *выражение*.’ (1:167-168)[34]

This passage sketches an idealized image of mankind’s “infancy,” a prelapsarian golden age when humanity lived in accordance with Nature, without thought and thus without need of expression.[35] The shaking of the infant’s cradle—the emergence of consciousness, when man gains awareness of himself, of Nature, and of his alienation from the natural world—produces a fundamental duality: thought and expression, *mysl’ i vyrazhenie*, are born.

Albrecht’s account of mankind’s spiritual history reflects a particular moment in Russian Romantic philosophical discourse. The conceit of *Russian Nights* is that a group of friends in the 1840s gather over the course of nine nights at the home of their mentor, Faust, to read an abandoned manuscript. The manuscript is said to have been penned by a mysterious, now-disbanded philosophical circle which gathered in the 1820s and with whom Faust once had close contact. The various inset tales that make up the bulk of the cycle’s first eight nights are fragments from this manuscript: “Sebastian Bach,” like the other stories, was originally transcribed by a member of the philosophical circle. Though the story is set in the eighteenth century, the aesthetic and philosophical principles articulated by Albrecht are firmly grounded in the Romantic dualism that Russia inherited from Germany in the 1810s and 20s.

In Russia these ideas were translated, adapted, and discussed primarily by the members of the *Obshchestvo liubomudriia* [Society for the Love of Wisdom], the circle of friends who met in Moscow between 1823 and 1825 to discuss the philosophical ideas of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Friedrich Schlegel.[36] Odoevskii was the frequent host of *Liubomudry* [“Wisdom lovers”] meetings and the co-editor, alongside Vil’gel’m Kiukhel’beker, of the Society’s 4-volume almanac *Mnemosyne* [*Mnemozina*] (1823-1825). The explicit purpose of *Mnemosyne* was to disseminate German philosophical ideas, as Odoevskii writes in a declaration on behalf of the journal’s publishers.[37] Indeed, many of the Society’s essays and articles offer a re-articulation of

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[34] All citations of Odoevskii refer to *V.F. Odoevskii, Sochinenii v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1981) and will appear parenthetically in the text by volume and page number.

[35] Tellingly, the Latin word *infans* means “inarticulate” or “without speech.”

[36] For discussions of the *Liubomudry* see Mann, *Russkaia filosofskaia estetika*; Cornwell, *The life, times and milieu of V.F. Odoevsky*, pp. 75-114; Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought From the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1980) pp. 74-80; and Zakhar Abramovich Kamenskii, *Moskovskii kruzhok liubomudrov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980).

[37] V.F. Odoevskii, “Neskol’ko slov o ‘Mnemozine’ samikh izdatelei,” *Russkie esteticheskie traktaty pervoi treti XIX v. v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1974), Vol. 2, p. 188.

ideas taken from sources in German Idealism.[38] Perhaps no philosopher held greater importance for the *Liubomudry* than Schelling, whose particular influence on Odoevskii is well established.[39] At the core of Schelling's transcendental system is a quest for knowledge figured as a search for the Absolute, a reality prior to subject-object differentiation.[40] Within the Absolute thought and being are one: the subject is self-identical with the object world and so reflection is not only unnecessary, but impossible.

The philosophical parable that Albrecht recites to Sebastian in the Eighth Night is a variant of this Schellingian story. Albrecht's ideas represent one of many instances of Romantic dualistic thinking within the cycle's embedded tales. The manuscript's frequent invocation of philosophical dualism is unsurprising when we consider that the authors of the mysterious manuscript, whom Faust refers to as "soul-searchers" [*dukhoispytateli*], are the fictional analogues of the *Liubomudry*. Faust explains to his younger friends in the frame story that the manuscript was written "a long time ago, when Schelling's philosophy was at its height" ["Это было давно, в самый разгар Шеллинговой философии"] (1:41)—that is, in the 1820s. Odoevskii renders the historical parallel explicit in his "Note to *Russian Nights*" ["Primechanie k *Russkim nocham*"], writing, "I shall also add that in the *Russian Nights* a reader will find a rather accurate picture of the intellectual activity to which the Moscow youth of the twenties and thirties gave themselves and about which almost no other information has been preserved" (31) [Прибавлю еще, что в «Русских ночах» читатель найдет довольно верную картину той умственной деятельности, которой предавалась московская молодежь 20-х и 30-х годов, о чем почти не сохранилось других сведений] (1:314). *Russian Nights* is an attempt to represent and reassess the philosophical stance of 1820s Moscow from a historical distance of twenty years. I would argue that, above all, Odoevskii in 1844 is concerned with reevaluating Romantic dualism and with formulating a new philosophical and aesthetic stance toward dualistic thinking.

Odoevskii composed *Russian Nights* during Romanticism's late stage in Russia. Like the other late Romantic mixed-genre cycles which I consider in this dissertation, *Russian Nights* interrogates and critiques such high Romantic categories and modes of thinking as aesthetic fragmentation and philosophical binarism. In doing so, *Russian Nights*, like Gogol's *Arabesques* and *Dead Souls* and Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*, engages in an experimental approach to the representational and formal capacities of late or post-Romantic literature. These texts are typically composed of parts—Nights, fragments, embedded tales—within a larger whole—a frame narrative, cycle, or multi-volume "epic"—and yet seek to bring the part and the whole into a mutually co-creative interplay, which transcends rather than affirms dualistic thinking. Of the

[38] For example, Mann writes of one of the most prominent of the *Liubomudry*, Dmitrii Venevitinov, that "[Venevitinov's] letters do not contain original ideas, but they are valuable for their precise and logical exposition of Schelling's system. Along with the notes of V. Odoevsky, they gave us one of the first interpretations of the Principle of Identity," p. 20.

[39] Many of the *Liubomudry* were educated at the Moscow University *Blagorodnyi pansion* by professors who were already steeped in Schelling's philosophy, some of whom had met and/or studied under Schelling personally. These include Ivan Ivanovich Davydov, Mikhail Grigor'evich Pavlov, Aleksei Fyodorovich Merzliakov, and Semyon Egorovich Raich. Cornwell writes that "The importance of Schelling in connection with Odoevsky's thought has been amply demonstrated […] and is never denied; as Kamensky has said, everyone agrees that Odoevskii took his main theoretical views from the early Schelling – the only disagreement in on the extent of this, and the effect." See Cornwell, p. 91.

[40] As Nassar explains, Schelling seeks the ground of knowledge in "an absolutely unconditioned reality, a reality that precedes subject-object determination: 'The ultimate ground of reality is a something which is thinkable only through itself, through its being, briefly, it is the principle in which thought and being are one.'" See Nassar, pp. 173-174.

authors considered in this dissertation, Odoevskii is the one who is most consciously and explicitly engaged in this philosophical project.

Odoevskii confronts this late Romantic task through a formally complex and experimental literary text which engages in a self-referential interrogation of the nature of artistic creation. As this chapter will demonstrate, *Russian Nights* is specifically preoccupied with finding a way to move beyond one predominant Romantic binary: that of thought and expression (*mysl' i vyrazhenie*). This is not to say that in 1844 Odoevskii sought a synthesis; synthesis, or reconciliation, was the dream of the 20s. The *Liubomudry* inherited this dream from Schelling, whose transcendental and aesthetic philosophies sought to identify a First Principle [*Grundsatz*] which precedes consciousness and to forge a path of reconciliation on a higher plane, no longer in unconsciousness but in freedom[41]; and from the Jena Romantics, who located the path to reconciliation in aesthetic activity.[42] It was this Romantic theory of redemptive art which most interested Odoevskii and the *Liubomudry* in the 1820s. By the 40s, however, Odoevskii's attitude toward early Romantic philosophy and aesthetics tended toward nostalgia and critique rather than strict adherence, as *Russian Nights*' carefully distanced framing of the "soul-searchers" and their manuscript suggests. Instead, I argue, Odoevskii's new aesthetic-philosophical goal was to represent and inhabit binary categories without necessarily resolving them. Odoevskii thus turns lateness into a generative source of inspiration for the development of new aesthetic forms, rather than viewing it primarily as a source of anxiety.

Like Gogol and Lermontov, Odoevskii interrogates his own position as a practitioner of late Romantic literature by representing non-literary artists and art objects to invoke an interarts metacommentary on aesthetics. Odoevskii wrote five Romantic tales about artists, all during the 1830s; of these five, four are included in *Russian Nights*. These are, in order of original publication: "Beethoven's Last Quartet" ["Poslednii kvartet Betkhovena"], published in the almanac *Severnye tsvety na 1831 god* in 1830; "Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi" (*Severnye tsvety na 1832 god*, 1831); "The Improvvisatore" ["Improvizator"] (*Al'tsiona na 1833 god*, 1833); and "Sebastian Bach" ["Sebastiian Bakh"] (*Moskovskii nabliudatel'*, 1835).[43] These four artists' tales occupy a central position in *Russian Nights*. They comprise the bulk of the embedded "manuscript" material supposedly written by the soul-searchers; they are also among the earliest of Odoevskii's texts to be included in the 1844 cycle.[44] As we will see, these four

[41] For Schelling the solution turned out to be twofold: one path to reconciliation led through philosophy, the other through art. According to Schelling the subject is capable of intuiting self-identity through both the transcendental system of philosophy and the "work of genius." Schelling lays out this theory of art most clearly in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) and *The Philosophy of Art* (1802-3). Nassar summarizes: "The goal of the *System* is to demonstrate the original unity of subject and object (mind and nature). However, demonstration implies mediation, while the original unity is necessarily immediate. The goal, then, appears paradoxical: to present the original (unmediated) unity in a conscious (mediated) way. Only a product that is able to present the unconscious in an immediate way can accomplish this task. It must, in other words, bring to consciousness that which usually escapes consciousness, without, however, losing its unconscious, or immediate, character. This product, Schelling explains [in *The Philosophy of Art*], is none other than the product of genius." See Nassar, pp. 222-223.

[42] Thus Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, summarizing the position held by the Schlegels, Novalis, and Ludwig Tieck, write in their now classic study that "Philosophy must fulfill itself in a work of art; art is the speculative *organon par excellence*." See Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, p. 35.

[43] The fifth and final of Odoevskii's artists' stories, and the only one not to be included in *Russian Nights*, is "The Painer" ["Zhivopisets"] (*Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1839), which was intended for the cycle *Notes of an Undertaker* [*Zapiski grobovshchika*], never completed.

[44] These four stories were initially intended for a cycle conceived under the title *The Madhouse* [*Dom sumasshedshikh*], plans for which Odoevskii began drafting no later than 1832. This cycle of madmen's tales later became *Russian Nights*. For a discussion of the publication history of these four artist's stories, see Cornwell, pp.

stories are all preoccupied with the same basic problem: How can the artist bridge the gulf between thought and expression, *mysl' i vyrazhenie*? For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to this problem as "the problem of inspiration" – inspiration here understood specifically as the force that mediates between an artist's inner vision and that vision's expression in the external world.

I argue that each of the four artists' stories in *Russian Nights* considers the problem of inspiration—that is, how to overcome the thought/expression binary—by viewing that problem within a secondary set of binary axes. There are three such secondary binaries in *Russian Nights*. The first is solipsism vs. spontaneity, i.e., artistic creation as inwardly inspired vs. outwardly derived. The second is inspiration as transhistorical vs. subject to historical progress and change. The third binary is madness vs. genius – the question of whether the line between madness and creative inspiration can ever be firmly drawn. As this chapter demonstrates, each artist's story in *Russian Nights* presents a different argument about the place that inspiration occupies along each of these binary axes. Thus, for example, the Piranesi and Beethoven stories represent inspiration as proceeding from the artist's own inner self, whereas "The Improvvisatore" and the Bach story present aesthetic inspiration as outwardly derived, proceeding from a force that is either demonic or divine. Meanwhile, the Piranesi story and "The Improvvisatore" are pessimistic about the possibility of ever clearly distinguishing between madness and genuine creativity, whereas the Beethoven story takes a more ambivalent stance, and "Sebastian Bach" suggests that true art is always distinct from the expressions of the madman.

All four of these stories, then, are premised upon Romantic dualistic thinking, conceiving of artistic inspiration in terms of a set of binary oppositions. *Russian Nights* brings these stories into a gradually unfolding dialogue and reframes them as the literary products of a particular period in Russian philosophical thought, i.e., the German-inflected Idealism of the 1820s. By simultaneously considering these distinct, and in some cases mutually exclusive portrayals of the nature of inspiration, and by embedding them within a frame narrative in the form of a philosophical dialogue, the 1844 cycle thereby critically diagnoses these dualisms and plays them off one another without ever committing to the Romantic dualistic understanding of aesthetic inspiration. And yet it does this while also itself being a literary text constructed upon a duality: the duality of part and whole, fragment and frame. By dialogically interrogating these four accounts of the thought/expression divide, *Russian Nights* also interrogates and attempts to model its own dialectic path out of dualism.

II. The Problem of Inspiration in Odoevskii's Artists' Tales

The four artist's stories included in *Russian Nights* appear in almost the same order as their original composition, with one notable exception. "Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi" appears first, in the Third Night, with "Beethoven's Last Quartet" (chronologically the first story to be written) following in the Sixth Night. "The Improvvisatore" comes next, in the Seventh Night, and "Sebastian Bach" concludes the story cycle in the Eighth Night. The arrangement of the artist's stories in *Russian Nights* is significant, as the discussion among the four friends in the frame narrative brings these stories into dialogue with one another, such that "The Improvvisatore" can be read as a response to "Beethoven's Last Quartet," which it immediately follows, and so on. The interlocutors themselves comment upon this dialogic

46-50; and N.N. Petrunina, "'Egipetskie nochi' i russkaia povest' 1830-kh godov" in *Pushkin: Issledovaniia i materialy* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1978), Vol. 8., pp. 22-50.

arrangement. Viacheslav accuses Faust of choosing "The Improvvisatore" on purpose to follow the Beethoven story: "'And you want to convince us that it was merely chance that brought Beethoven together with the Improvvisatore, when both stories deal with one and the same thought, although expressed from opposite points of view?'" (145) ['И ты хочешь нас уверить, что просто случай соединил «Бетховена» с «Импровизатором», когда в том и другом одна мысль, но выраженная с противоположных сторон?'] (1:139). Indeed, not only "Beethoven" and "The Improvvisatore," but all four of the artist's stories deal with "one and the same thought, expressed from opposite points of view." Viacheslav's characterization of the relationship between these stories and his particular use of the phrase "…*одна мысль, но выраженная* с противоположны сторон" suggests that *Russian Nights* as a whole seeks an alternative to the duality of thought and expression (*mysl' i vyrazhenie*) by weaving together numerous possible expressions to embody the same essential thought. The vision of aesthetic inspiration that emerges from *Russian Nights* as a cycle must therefore be sought in the dialogic spaces that exist between the four individual artists' stories, each of which presents only one potential image of artistic creation. In what follows I will attempt to tease out the interchange of ideas about how inspiration works—about how thought is translated into aesthetic expression—that emerges among the *Künstlerromane* of *Russian Nights*.

In discussing these four stories, I will deviate slightly from the chronological order in which they appear in the cycle, while nevertheless always keeping this order in mind and referring back to it as an important component of the texts' dialogue with one another. For reasons that shall become clear later on, I will discuss the Beethoven and Bach stories together in the second half of the chapter, while turning my attention first to the two non-musicians' tales.

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In addition to featuring non-musical artists, "Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi" and "The Improvvisatore" share a preoccupation with the genius/madness dichotomy, one of the three central binaries along which each of the four artists' stories in *Russian Nights* is organized. This binary is introduced in the frame narrative of the Second Night as the interlocutors discuss the troubling resemblance between insanity and aesthetic activity. This resemblance is based upon the tendency of both artists and madmen to perceive reality as fragmented, to "tear off parts of objects which are tightly united for a healthy person" ["отрывать части от предметов, тесно соединенных между собою для здорового человека"] (1:53) and to reassemble them into an original whole. The friends suggest that, in the case of the artist, this whole is an aesthetic unity, whereas in the case of the madman it is a meaningless monomania. The former creates or reveals meaning that speaks not only to the artist, but to others who bear witness to his art, whereas the latter generates nothing of true significance for anyone apart from the monomaniac. What concerns the soul-searchers [*dukhoispytateli*] whose abandoned manuscript contains the stories of Piranesi and the improvisor Cypriano is the fact that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between these two categories, to differentiate aesthetic unity from the monomania of the madman.

"Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi," the first of the artists' stories to be presented in *Russkie nochi* and the opening tale in the soul-searchers' manuscript, is dictated to the soul-searchers by an embedded narrator, a self-proclaimed bibliomaniac whose obsession with antiquities offers a vision of monomania in caricatured form. The bibliomaniac narrates his encounter with an eccentric man in a Neapolitan auction shop who claims to be Giovanni

Battista Piranesi (1720-1778), a Venetian engraver and draughtsman known primarily for his fanciful drawings of Roman ruins and imaginary prisons. The historical Piranesi is a perfect figure for creative genius which threatens to descend into madness. His biography also provides an ideal case study for exploring another of the three central binaries I have identified in *Russkie nochi*—artistic solipsism, or the privileging of inner vision, vs. a commitment to genuine expression in the external world. An artist inspired by a unique creative vision, Piranesi in his etchings offers an image of reality transformed that borders on madness. The Roman *vedute* [*Views of Rome*] exaggerate scale and perspective and combine Baroque features with ancient Roman architecture in fanciful ways.[45] *Le Carceri d'Invenzione* [*Imaginary Prisons*], Piranesi's 16 etchings of fantastic prisons, are believed to be the product of an actual bout of fever-induced delirium resulting from Piranesi's infection with malaria in 1742. The *Prisons* have long been perceived as suggesting a mind inflamed:

> First of all, what we are shown [in the *Prisons*] is a dream. No connoisseur of oneiric matters will hesitate a moment in the presence of these drawings evincing all the chief characteristics of the dream state: negation of time, incoherence of space, suggested levitation, intoxication of the impossible reconciled or transcended, terror closer to ecstasy than is assumed by those who analyze the visionary's creations from outside, absence of visible contact between the dream's part of characters, and finally a fatal and necessary beauty.[46]

It is a volume of the *Prisons* that catches the narrator's eye in the auction shop. It is also to this volume that the madman calling himself Piranesi most emphatically refers when he claims to be haunted by his own unrealized architectural designs. "Piranesi" reveals to the narrator that his designs, chained to copper and paper and unable to achieve manifestation in stone, have conceived demons which torment him: "'These spirits are evil: they love to live, love to multiply and torture their creator for the narrow dwelling he gave them'" (64) ['Эти духи свойства злого: они любят жить, любят множиться и терзать своего творца за тесное жилище'] (1:62). The prisons clamor and threaten to lock Piranesi in the abysmal vaults which he himself created.

In Piranesi's visions, the conflict between thought and expression is played out as a supernatural drama. The demons that haunt Piranesi are a manifestation of the torment an artist feels when they are unable to find the right objective expression for their inner vision.[47] Piranesi is the perfect figure to embody this moment in the creative process when a thought has been conceived but has not yet acquired material form: his architectural designs are famous for being too fantastic to realize in the external world. Indeed, the historical Piranesi only ever worked on a

[45] Marguerite Yourcenar suggests that, while it is Piranesi's prisons that are generally considered emblems of the irrational in contrast to his more sedate *Views* and *Antiquities of Rome*, the prison etchings offer a development of the irrationality and dreamlike quality which are already present in his cityscapes. See Yourcenar, "The Dark Brain of Piranesi" (1959-1961), in *The Dark Brain of Piranesi And Other Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Inc., 1980).

[46] ibid, pp. 110-111.

[47] Recall from the Introduction Odoevskii's 1844 letter to Kraevskii: "Finally, – call it superstition, whatever you like, – but I know from experience that it is impossible to command yourself to write this or that, one way or the other; a thought comes to me unexpectedly, spontaneously, and finally begins to torment me, growing incessantly into material form – it is this moment in the psychological process that I wanted to express in Piranesi, and for that reason he is the first act in my psychological drama…" (translation mine).

single piece of actual architecture, when he was commissioned to restore the church of Santa Maria Aventina in Rome. Apart from this project, all his creative efforts were confined to sketches and engravings. Here he could let his imagination give birth to capricious visions entirely of his own design. In Piranesi, we find a perfect example of aesthetic inspiration that proceeds almost entirely from the artist's own mind, unimpeded by the laws and limitations of the object world. The risk of a solipsism bordering on insanity that follows from this model of inspiration is embodied in the demonic vaults and towers that pursue Piranesi's 19th century double across the continent.

The story recorded in the soul-searchers' manuscript thus becomes a parable of aesthetic inspiration that is limited by its basis in pure subjectivity. Odoevskii's Piranesi represents the alienation of the artist who cannot translate his inner vision into the object world. This model of alienated artistic ingenuity will find a more optimistic response in "Beethoven's Last Quartet."

The response that this story evokes among the young friends in the frame narrative, meanwhile, contextualizes Piranesi's half-mad artistic vision within the third and final central binary of *Russian Nights*, which we might characterize as the application of a transhistoricist aesthetic framework vs. an adherence to historical periodization. The frame discussion centers on the function of art in modernity. Towards the end of his tale, Piranesi informs the narrator that, pursued by the devilish spirits of his etchings, he is now forced to wander eternally from country to country seeking a patron who will provide him with the material expenses needed to construct his fantastic designs. He even requests money from the narrator, who can only offer him a single gold coin. Victor, who plays the role of enlightened cynic in the cycle's philosophical dialogues, proclaims that there can be no sympathy for this madman who seeks to raise money for the construction of "useless edifices" when that money has already been spent on practical objects such as railroads:

> 'What attention, what sympathy can a crank who wants to revive the past, the distant past, evoke when treasures and effort went for the satisfaction of childish vanity, for building useless edifices? …There is no money now for that kind of thing, simply because now they are using it for building railroads.' (66)
>
> 'Какое внимание, какое участие может возбудить чудак, который хочет возвратить время прошедшее и давнопрошедшее, когда сокровища и труды погибали для удовлетворения ребяческого тщеславия, на постройку бесполезных зданий…теперь нет на это денег, и по самой простой причине – они употреблены на железные дороги.' (1:63)

Victor thus introduces the problem of modernity into the Third Night and the discussion of Piranesi. He reframes the story's animating conflict not so much in terms of thought vs. expression, but in terms of aesthetic pleasure vs. utility in the age of scientific rationality. In the 19th century, Victor seems to suggest, as railroads span the length of Europe and mankind appears to have conquered nature, even a project as marvelous as an Arch of Triumph stretching from Etna to Vesuvius might be possible. But why embark upon such a project? In this era of rationality, art is not only "useless" next to railroads; it represents a historical backsliding, a return to an outdated way of relating to the world. The sensation of spiritual fulfillment that human beings experience when they encounter a work of genius—what Faust, countering Victor, calls the feeling of "poetry" [поэзия]—finds itself without a place in the modern age.

Faust insists upon the importance of this extra-rational sense of fulfillment achieved through art, claiming that it is this experience which grants life and meaning to the increasingly fragmented elements of the world when viewed through the lens of modern science. As 19th-century scientific advancement increasingly relies on specialization and the breakdown of nature into discrete components and categories, Faust suggests that it is aesthetic experience which must provide a sense of wholeness or unity which is otherwise missing from the contemporary world: "'One-sidedness is the poison of present societies and the secret cause of all complaints, troubles, and bewilderment; when one branch lives at the expense of the whole tree—the tree withers away'" (68) ['Односторонность есть яд нынешних обществ и тайная причина всех жалоб, смут и недоумений; когда одна ветвь живет на счет целого дерева—дерево иссыхает'] (1:65). Faust's comments recall the response to modernity offered by German transcendental philosophy, especially Schiller. Andrew Bowie has demonstrated that, beginning with Kant, German philosophy sought to develop a holistic model of the universe that would offer a corrective to the sense of disintegration created by modern science.[48] Art and aesthetics, Bowie argues, play a key role in this model:

> The central new idea [in German philosophical aesthetics] is that the beauty of nature need not have an ulterior function and can be its own purpose. Analogously, the rules of an art are seen as the self-legitimating products of human freedom, not as the result of the instrumental attempt to grasp objective necessities or natural regularities.[49]

It is precisely this self-legitimating, non-instrumentalized aspect of art that Faust celebrates when he says to Victor, "'It seems to me that in Piranesi human feeling cries about what is lost, what may have been the clue to all its external actions, what had made the adornment of life—about *the useless*…'" (67) ['Мне кажется, что в Пиранези плачет человеческое чувство о том, что оно потеряло, о том, что может быть, составляло разгадку всех его внешних действий, что составляло украшение жизни—о *бесполезном*'] (1:64). While railroads unify faraway places for the sake of travel and commerce, Piranesi's Arch of Triumph would link Etna and Vesuvius for no purpose whatsoever apart from aesthetic pleasure.

The elision in Faust's reference to "Piranesi" in the above quote—is he referring to the eccentric in the soul-searchers' story, or to the historical engraver?—is important. If we take Faust's statement to refer to the 18th-century engraver, then the argument about modernity, introduced by Victor, recedes into the background. "In Piranesi human feeling cries about what is lost" – that is, in Piranesi's fantastic images we are given a sense of the human search for meaning and spiritual integration *sub specie aeternitatis*. The Roman *vedute*, which flatten history by combining ancient ruins with contemporary Baroque adornments in an eerie vision of timeless immensity[50]; the "megalomaniac and sublime *Prisons*" which do not resemble any

[48] See Andrew Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy: From Kant to Habermas* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003).
[49] Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, 2nd edition (Manchester and NY: Manchester UP, 1990, 2003), p. 5.
[50] Richard Wendort asserts that "No one is more closely associated with this double vision of ancient and contemporary Rome than Giovanni Battista Piranesi." See Wendort, "Piranesi's Double Ruin," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2001), p. 161.

historically specific penitentiaries[51]: these artworks, Faust seems to suggest, can be viewed as a general expression of postlapsarian human longing for, and striving after, the sublime.

The German Idealist-inflected model of history that Faust proposes here, in variance to Victor's preoccupation with the progression of modernity, is simultaneously transhistoricist and lapsarian, suggesting that the entirety of historical time can be divided into two categories: preconscious/prior to the fall, and conscious/after the fall. A key to understanding this transhistorical model is offered in the figure of the Wandering Jew, to whom Piranesi compares himself. Addressing the narrator, the madman asks, "'Have you heard about the man called the Eternal Jew? Everything they tell about him is a lie: this ill-starred man is before you…'" (64) ['Слыхали ль вы о человеке, которого называют *вечным жидом*? Все, что рассказывают о нем, -- ложь: этот злополучный перед вами…'] (1:62). Piranesi certainly recalls the figure of the Wandering Jew: he is condemned to wander the earth beyond his natural lifespan, seeking patronage for his immense projects, pursued by tormenting spirits. As a literary-philosophical trope, the Wandering Jew represents temporal eternity—he is immortal, a journeyer across all nations and eras—while also inscribing the narrative of the fall, the tragic moment of mankind's coming into consciousness. Indeed, Geoffrey Hartman has argued that "The theme which best expresses this perilous nature of consciousness, and which has haunted literature since the Romantic period, is that of the […] Wandering Jew."[52] As an eternal traveler, the Wandering Jew embodies the notion of *Sehnsucht*, longing or nostalgia, which is so central to the Romantic project.[53] Significantly, among the Romantic heroes whom Hartman lists as variations on the Wandering Jew trope (Cain, Coleridge's Ancient Mariner), Hartman includes Faust. Odoevskii's Faust has relatively little in common with the traditional Germanic figure that serves as Goethe's object; and yet the mysterious philosopher who guides the discussions in the frame story of *Russian Nights* also gives the impression of being located outside of history, an observer but not an active participant in the concerns of his young friends of the 1840s.[54] If Victor represents progress and modernity, then Faust expresses a worldview that enfolds all ages of history into the categories of "before" and "after" the fall. According to such a unifying worldview, all artworks, as well as the inspiration that created them and the feelings which they evoke, transcend historical specificity. Piranesi is not "an artist of the 18th century"; he is simply an artist of genius.

And yet, Victor's reading of the Piranesi figure—as an eccentric madman whose madness is constituted by a commitment to irrationality in the face of a rational modern age—is not unconvincing. Victor here (as elsewhere) represents an approach to aesthetics and history which categorizes artworks according to era—Piranesi is thus a representative of the Baroque era, a mode antithetical to 19th-century rationalism—and which is skeptical of the idea of the aesthetic as a universalizing or historically transcendent experience. We might go so far as to identify in Victor's argument a Hegelian historical framework, which is then brought into tension with the

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[51] Yourcenar, pp. 108-109.

[52] See Geoffrey Hartman, "Romanticism and 'Anti-Self-Consciousness,'" *The Centennial Review*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1962), p. 558.

[53] For a discussion of wandering as a figure for *Sehnsucht*, see Theodore Gish, "'Wanderlust' and 'Wanderleid': The Motif of the Wandering Hero in German Romanticism," *Studies in Romanticism*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1964), pp. 225-239.

[54] According to Zhirmunskii, Goethe and Goethe's Faust offered Odoevskii a general image of the "poet-philosopher," but did not provide a more concrete influence on his works. See V.M. Zhirmunskii, *Gete v russkoi literature* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1981), pp. 150-153. Neil Cornwell adds that "Odoyevsky himself said that his own Faust, who in any case bears little enough resemblance to the protagonist of Goethe, was only a traditional persona." See Cornwell, pp. 276-277.

Schellingian framework advocated by Faust. As we shall see, the conflicting conceptions of the artist's place in history that are represented by Faust and Victor inform each image of the artist that *Russian Nights* puts forth. The transhistorical/universalizing approach represented by Faust suggests that all artists derive inspiration from a universal and eternal source (the divine, the numinous). A more historically oriented model would foreground innovation: the artist as an original, as the bearer of a unique vision and the inventor of new forms. To put things again in Hegelian terms, art moves teleologically through constantly better stages, rendering earlier artworks anachronous. As we shall see, the tension between these two historical-aesthetic frameworks, here only alluded to, will reach a high point in "Beethoven's Last Quartet" and "Sebastian Bach."

When it comes to the problem of translating thought, *mysl'*, into expression, *vyrazhenie*, "Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi" ultimately suggests that, by adhering to their own inner vision and ignoring the limits of the material world, an artist may produce beautiful and compelling fragments, but never a true aesthetic whole. The inability or unwillingness to recognize and account for material limits in the creative process bears a troubling resemblance to insanity; solipsism risks descending into madness. The extent to which an artist's inner vision is perceived as madness or folly also depends upon the historical framework one chooses to apply. What looks like irrationality or backwardness within a teleological temporality that privileges modernity can nevertheless be viewed as deeply meaningful from a transhistoricist perspective which sees all art as an attempt to recover a lost feeling of unity. And yet, none of the answers arrived at in "Piranesi" should be taken as final. The conflicts between inner and outer inspiration, madness and genius, and art's reliance on a universal vs. a historically specific context continue to be staged throughout the remaining three artists' stories in *Russian Nights*.

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"The Improvvisatore," the second of the non-musical tales, advances the preoccupation with madness that is first introduced in "Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi." In this case, however, the problem is not that the titular artist, the improvisor Cypriano, relies too heavily on his own subjective creative vision. It is rather the opposite: as a poet who is given the supernatural ability to improvise verses instantaneously and without effort for the gratification of a paying audience, Cypriano represents automation and materialism, the alienation of the wealth-seeking artist from his own imagination and from the aesthetic process.

Odoevskii's decision to use the Italian art of improvisation to express alienation and the reduction of artistic creation to a mechanical process is no accident. The *improvvisatori* who originated in Italy during the Renaissance achieved widespread popularity in Europe in the early 19th century. European Romanticism tended to be both fascinated by and contemptuous of the Italian improvisor's art, which as an extemporaneous, oral, and theatrical genre was seen as the lowbrow double of loftier written verse. A common critique held that, while the improvisor's extemporization was impressive when experienced live, his lines, when printed in newspapers and literary magazines after the performance, often appeared repetitive, predictable, or unoriginal. The commodity nature of improvisation was also criticized, as *improvvisatori* typically performed in large theater halls before a paying audience which, by offering up topics for improvisation, took an active part in the poem's composition.[55] Improvisation was thus

[55] For a discussion of the history and reception of Italian *improvvisatori* in 19th-century Europe, see especially Angela Esterhammer's monograph *Romanticism and Improvisation, 1750-1850* (Cambridge UP, 2008).

perceived by some poets and literary critics as the obverse of genuine poetic inspiration: a parlor trick mechanically performed for the entertainment of the bourgeois public, rather than the unique, authentic expression of the poet's own feelings.

In Russia Odoevskii was one of those Romantics who distrusted the art of improvisation, denigrating it as a mechanical craft rather than honoring it as a true artform. He was opposed in this by Pushkin, whose *Egyptian Nights* [*Egipetskie nochi*] (written in 1835, published posthumously in 1837) offers a less cynical vision of improvisation as an artform distinct from, but nevertheless equal to poetry.[56] Odoevskii's "The Improvvisatore" combines Italian improvisation with the supernatural to create an image of the art object completely divorced from the artist's inner vision. In this story, a young poet named Cypriano is tormented by the difficulty of poetic composition. First he struggles to conceive the idea behind a poem, which only gradually appears to him "like a barely visible star"; then, once the idea has finally been born in his imagination, he is unable to find the right words to express it: "…myriad worlds separated the poet from expression; he could not find words, and those that he did find would not coalesce; the meter was not pliable; an importunate pronoun would appear; a lanky verb would spring up between nouns…" (133) […выражение отлетало от поэта за мириады миров; он не находил слов, а если и находил, то они не клеились; метр не гнулся; привязчивое местоимение хваталось за каждое слово; долговязый глагол путался между именами…] (1:128). The conflict that torments all of Odoevskii's artists, the abyss that separates thought from expression, is heightened in Cypriano, as neither thought nor expression comes to him readily. In an effort to bypass the labor of creation, Cypriano seeks supernatural aid from the demonic doctor Segeliel.

Despite the basis of his powers in occult "Eastern" magic, Segeliel is in many ways a representative of Western modernity. He engages extensively in business: in addition to mysterious Arabic manuscripts, "his papers consisted of commercial correspondence with bankers and prominent merchants in all parts of the world" (135) [Все бумаги его состояли из коммерческих переписок с банкирами и знатнейшими купцами всех частей света] (1:130). When accused of healing his patients with dark magic and of killing those who refuse him payment, Segeliel proves through rational argument, scientific evidence, and the aid of the modern legal system that he is innocent: "And, thanks to European enlightenment, Dr. Segeliel continued to live in luxury, to entertain the best society, to treat his patients according to conditions proposed by him; and his enemies continued to fall ill and to die as before" (138) [и – благодаря европейскому просвещению – доктор Сегелиель продолжал вести свою роскошную жизнь, собирать у себя все лучшее общество, лечить на предлагаемых им

Esterhammer traces reactions to the extemporization of poetry from early European encounters with Italian *improvvisatori* in the mid-eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century, when improvisation's widespread popularity in Europe generated a number of essays, short stories, and *Bildungsromane* centering around the figure of the *improvvisatore*. Esterhammer is particularly interested in the ways in which improvisation relates to and models Romantic and post-Romantic sociability. See also Esterhammer's "Coleridge's 'The Improvisatore': Poetry, Performance, and Remediation," *The Wordsworth Circle*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (2011), pp. 122-128 and Michael Caesar, "Poetic Improvisation in the Nineteenth Century: Giuseppe Regaldi and Giannina Milli," *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 101, No. 3 (2006), pp. 701-714.

[56] Nina Petrunina writes, "В основе повести [«Импровизатор»] Одоевского лежит недоверие к искусству импровизации как таковому" ["At the foundation of Odoevskii's story ['The Improvvisatore'] lies distrust in the art of improvisation as such"]. She contrasts this perspective with Pushkin's in *Egyptian Nights*, arguing that, while Pushkin was probably not engaged in a conscious polemic with Odoevskii—whose tale he may or may not have been aware of—his story offers an alternative vision of improvisation as poetry's ambivalent double, a genuinely brilliant artform that is degraded by its links to vulgar commerce. See Petrunina, "'Egipetskie nochi' i russkaia povest' 1830-kh godov," pp. 22-50.

условиях, а враги его продолжали занемогать и умирать по-прежнему] (1:133). Thus, the problem of modernity that is first introduced in the frame narrative of the Third Night reemerges in "The Improvvisatore," which explicitly links Enlightenment rationalism with the demonic. Furthermore, the two "gifts" that Segeliel gives to Cypriano can be seen as extensions of the goals of modern science: the ability to produce instantaneously, with no effort (mechanization), and the ability "to see everything, to know everything, to understand everything" (complete knowledge of nature).

This second ability is a fantastic manifestation of the same scientific rationalism which Faust criticizes so thoroughly in the Third Night. Under the influence of this gift, Cypriano no longer perceives bodies, natural organisms, or even works of art as integrated objects. Instead, he sees them as a collection of fragments, microscopic particles, and chemical reactions. Encountering Charlotte, the woman he loves, Cypriano is horrified to discover that her beauty dissolves before his eyes into an amalgamation of organic compounds and bodily functions. Seeking consolation in an icon of the Madonna, Cypriano finds that he is no longer able to perceive the holy image: instead, he sees only the chemical processes that went into creating the paints. This is the Romantic-Idealist's nightmare of modern science, which by reducing nature to a series of rationally deducible laws leaves no place for the subject's experience of aesthetic pleasure, which is extra-rational and unable to be articulated in analytic terms. All that remains of the world for Cypriano is a series of dead fragments, unanimated by a unifying purpose or essence: "everything in nature decomposed before him, but nothing united in his soul" (142) [все в природе разлагалось пред ним, но ничто не соединялось в душе его] (1:136).

These gifts turn Cypriano from his original calling as a poet to the vocation of *improvizator*. He performs before large audiences and greedily accepts their money; "His face, however, did not reflect the lofty enjoyment of a poet, satisfied with his creation, but rather the simple, self-satisfied look of a juggler surprising the crowd with his skill" (132) [но на лице его видно было не высокое наслаждение поэта, довольного своим творением, а лишь простое самодовольство фокусника, проворством удивляющего толпу] (1:127). Ultimately, even the rewards of money and applause are not enough to atone for Cypriano's loss of all poetic feeling, and he loses his mind. Unlike Piranesi, whose madness results from an excess of subjective vision, Cypriano's insanity derives from his complete alienation from his own inner life: "The delicate bonds that tied the mysterious elements of thoughts and feelings were broken—and they fell apart like crystals eaten through by caustic acid. Neither thoughts nor feelings remained in his soul: it harbored only phantoms clothed in words, incomprehensible even to him" (144-145) [поломались тонкие связи, которыми соединены таинственные стихии мыслей и чувствований, — и они распались, как распадаются кристаллы, проржавленные едкою кислотою; в душе его не осталось ни мыслей, ни чувствований: остались какие-то фантомы, облеченные в одежду слов, для него самого непонятных] (1:139). Whereas Piranesi's experience of the world becomes fragmented as a result of his inability to unite his fantastic visions with representations in stone, the "thin connections" of Cypriano's subjectivity break and fragment because of his complete reliance on external, automatic expression. Piranesi's inspiration fails because it comes entirely from within; Cypriano's, because it comes entirely from without.

The conflicting historical temporalities that we observed in "Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi"—the Idealist model of time as pre- or post-lapsarian vs. accounts of historical progression—enter into an even more complex relation in "The Improvvisatore." In this story, the threat of modernity, represented in the nightmare of poetry transformed into mere

improvisation and of living feeling replaced by cold, mechanical knowledge, is inscribed *into* a vision of eternal evil. Both Segeliel and the cursed Cypriano are associated with ancient occult powers: when Cypriano performs, the words pour from his lips "like phantasmagoric visions from a magic sacrificial vessel" (132) [как фантасмагорические видения из волшебного жертвенника] (1:127), and Segeliel appears as a practitioner of black magic and an agent of the devil, striking bargains for men's souls. Both also recall the image of the Wandering Jew, especially Cypriano, who roams the earth in search of an end to his torment and who, like Piranesi, tells his story to anyone who will listen.[57] And yet, as we have seen, the powers possessed by Segeliel and gifted to Cypriano are also associated with science and Enlightenment rationalism. Thus, "The Improvvisatore" presents the threats of modernity—alienation, the loss of spiritual awe, the inability to experience aesthetic pleasure—as historically specific manifestations of a greater transhistorical evil. Considered in light of the cycle's investment in developing a theory of artistic inspiration, this vision of modernity as one instantiation of an eternal threat to aesthetic experience suggests that artistic striving should be viewed both as a historically contingent and as a universal and transhistorical force.

As we have seen, the line between aesthetic creation and madness is one of the central organizing binaries along which the artists' stories of *Russian Nights* operate. Both the 19th-century Piranesi double and the *improvvisatore* Cypriano occupy a place on that line that is closer to insanity than to art. Taken together, these two stories reveal that the nature of artistic inspiration is always precarious. If inspiration proceeds entirely from within the creating subject, then the danger is that it will descend into solipsism and megalomania; if inspiration gives way to too great an attention to the forms of the external world, or to an attempt to please a paying audience, then art threatens to become lifeless and mechanical. The former danger suggests a preponderance of thought (*mysl'*) over expression (*vyrazhenie*), a sort of formless outburst of aesthetic energy; the latter implies expression without thought, creation as calculation rather than passion.

These two artists' tales are answered by the more ambivalent musicians' stories: "Beethoven's Last Quartet," which directly precedes "The Improvvisatore," and "Sebastian Bach," which follows it. As shall become clear below, the Beethoven story offers an ambivalent counterexample to "Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi," suggesting that inspiration understood as inner vision can produce genuine, if perhaps spiritually compromised art. The Bach story, which offers the most triumphant image of artistic creation in all of Odoevskii's writing, suggests that the truest inspiration proceeds from the divine, and replicates or transcribes the transcendent forms of the natural world.

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In an effort to further untangle Odoevskii's attempts to articulate a theory of inspiration that exceeds the dualistic categories of thought and expression in *Russian Nights*, I propose turning to Odoevskii's engagement with a facet of Romantic aesthetics that we have not yet considered: the hierarchy of artforms.[58] While painting was considered the sister art of poetry for

[57] Geoffrey Hartman has pointed out that the Wandering Jew figure often overlaps with the figure of the poet in Romantic texts; a prototypical example is Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. See Hartman, pp. 558-559.

[58] The "hierarchy of artforms" here refers to attempts in German (and later Russian) aesthetic theory of the 18th and early 19th centuries to theorize the differing affordances of music, literature, and the visual and plastic arts and to articulate a theoretical relationship between the various artforms. In Germany the tradition emerged from

much of European history, during the Romantic era music shifted to the top of the hierarchy of the arts and displaced painting as the interarts model for literary composition.[59] As M.H. Abrams has shown, the rise of literary and philosophical interest in music in the early 19th century was linked to a shift away from the mimetic theory of art and toward an expressive theory of aesthetics. The early German Romantics, Abrams writes,

> sometimes talked of music as though it were the very essence and form of the spirit made patent—a play of pure feeling in time, unaltered by its physical medium […] German critics, therefore, tended to use music as the apex and norm of the pure and nonrepresentative expression of all spirit and feeling, against which to measure the relative expressiveness of all other forms of art.[60]

In many ways, music appeared to offer a solution to the perceived tension between thought and expression, *mysl' i vyrazhenie*, that was so important to Romantic art in general and to Odoevskii's project in *Russian Nights* in particular. As the least material and least representational of all the arts, music was taken as "the very essence and form of the spirit made patent," "unaltered by its physical medium" – a pure expression of feeling. Andrew Bowie has argued that it is precisely music's status as a non-representational artform that allowed it, in the 19th century, to be taken as evidence of the extra-rational, non-discursive element of human subjectivity over and against scientific rationalism.[61] As a result, many Romantic writers turned to music as a model for literary composition, just as neoclassical writers had turned to painting. The most famous of these writers are, without a doubt, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Wilhelm Wackenroder, and Ludwig Tieck.[62] Odoevskii followed these German writers in foregrounding the musician as exemplary artist and, moreover, in attempting to "render music in verbal discourse" in an effort to claim some measure of music's expressiveness for literary art.[63] Like

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foundational treatises on aesthetics such as Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1750-58) and Lessing's *Laokoon* (1766) and culminated in the aesthetic theories of Schelling and Hegel. In Russia hierarchies of the arts were proposed in a series of essays throughout the 1820s. These include Odoevskii's "An Essay in the Theory of the Fine Arts" ["Opyt teorii iziashchnykh iskusstv"] (1823-1825); Alexander Galich's "An Essay in the Science of the Beautiful" ["Opyt nauki iziashchnogo"] (1825); Dmitri Venevitinov's "Analysis of an Article on Evgenii Onegin" ["Razbor stat'i o Evgenii Onegine"] (1825) and "Sculpture, Painting, and Music" ["Skul'ptura, zhivopis' i muzyka"] (1827); and Gogol's "Sculpture, Painting, and Music" (included in *Arabesques*).

[59] Herbert Lindenberger notes that, throughout most of Western history, "The sisterhood claimed by poetry and painting did not exist for poetry and music" (365). The status of this sisterhood, in many cases the result of a "willful misinterpretation" of Horace's dictum "ut pictura poesis," began to diminish in the late 18th century as music rose above painting and even, in some cases, above literature in theories of aesthetics: "…one of the central facts about the relationships of the various arts between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries is the rise in the status of music." See Lindenberger, "Literature and the Other Arts," p. 373.

[60] See the subsection in Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp* titled "Expressive Theory in Germany: Ut Musica Poesis," pp. 88-94.

[61] See Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, pp. 221-257.

[62] Mihaly Szegedy-Maszak discusses Hoffmann's mode of rendering music as narrative and his transformation of the nonliterary, specifically music, into "a self-interpretive device." See Szegedy-Maszak, "'Unheard melodies and unseen paintings': The sister arts in Romantic fiction," *Romantic Prose Fiction*, ed. Gillespie, Engel, & Dieterle (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2008), pp. 53-68. Similarly, Claudia Albert discusses Hoffmann and Tieck's invention of "a 'musical language' or 'verbal music'" and argues that "Romantic narration creates for itself, through attention to music, an endless agenda of writing and reflection." See Albert, "Music and Romantic narration," *Romantic Prose Fiction*, pp. 69-89.

[63] Lindenberger describes E.T.A. Hoffmann's "model attempts to render music in verbal discourse," attempts which set the stage for later writers like Thomas Mann, whose musician-hero Adrian Leverkuhn in *Doctor Faustus* (1947)

Hoffmann, Odoevskii also doubled as both a writer and a musicologist, publishing widely on issues of musical theory and developments in the world of Russian music. He was also himself a passionate musician and an amateur composer.

Both artists' stories in *Russian Nights* that describe the lives of musicians feature historical composers, Ludwig van Beethoven and Johann Sebastian Bach. The choice of these two composers in particular underscores Odoevskii's commitment to interrogating that music which was valued most highly in Romantic musical aesthetics. In Germany, Bach gained a reputation in the Romantic age as a truly "universal" musical creator.[64] His music was especially admired by Hoffmann, an influential music critic who helped set the standards for musical taste in the 1810s.[65] Beethoven, meanwhile, emerged as the principal representative of Romantic music, thanks in no small part to Hoffmann's influential review of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (4 and 11 July 1810) and the essay "Beethoven's Instrumental Music" which soon followed (1814). Odoevskii, like Hoffmann, admired both composers. From a young age Odoevskii identified Bach as his favorite composer, and became especially attracted to the symphonies of Beethoven in the 1820s.[66] In Russia, as in Germany, there was a critical precedent for Odoevskii's assertion of the universal significance of Beethoven's music: Dmitrii Venevitinov described Beethoven as a "rare example of the greatness of the human personality and of the philosopher among musicians" [редкий пример величия человеческой личности и философа среди музыкантов], while Belinskii identified Beethoven as "music's Shakespeare"[67]

By focusing his creative energies on the two composers held in the highest esteem by the German Romantic tradition, Odoevskii inserts himself into an ongoing dialogue about aesthetics that takes music as its archetypal artform. "Beethoven's Last Quartet" offers a somewhat

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represents a similar instance of literature trying to borrow for itself the powerful expressiveness of musical composition. See Lindenberger, "Literature and the Other Arts." Odoevskii's indebtedness to Hoffmann in particular is widely acknowledged. During his own lifetime Odoevskii acquired the epithet "*russkii Gofman*," and in the "Primechanie k 'Russkim nocham,' appended for a proposed second edition of the work in the early 1860s, Odoevskii himself writes "Многие находили, иные в похвалу, другие в осуждение, что в «Русских ночах» я старался подражать Гофману. Это обвинение меня не слишком тревожит […] это неизбежно уже по гармонической связи, естественно существующей между людьми всех эпох и всех народов; никакая мысль не родится без участия в этом зарождении другой предшествующей мысли, своей или чужой" (189) ["Many found, some with praise, others with judgement, that in *Russian Nights* I tried to imitate Hoffmann. This accusation does not worry me too much […] it is inevitable according to the harmonious connection which naturally exists between people of all epochs and all nations; no thought will ever be born without the participation in this birth of another, previous thought, one's own or someone else's"] (1:310). Odoevskii's response in the "Primechanie" is likely aimed at Belinskii, who in his review "Sochineniia kniazia V.F. Odoevskogo" (1844) accused many sections of *Russkie nochi* of being a weak imitation of Hoffmann. See V.G. Belinskii, "Sochineniia kniazia V.F. Odoevskogo. Tri chasti. Sankt-Peterburg. 1844," *Sobranie sochinenii v deviati tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1976-1982), v. 7. Stat'i, retsenzii i zametki, dekabr' 1843 – avgust 1845.

[64] Friedrich Blume discusses the "re-emergence of Bach in the Romantic period" in "Bach in the Romantic Era," *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (1964), pp. 290–306.

[65] In "Hoffmann as a Writer on Music," David Charlton notes that one of the widely held assumptions to be born out of the "Age of Beethoven" was "the idea of J.S. Bach as a universal musical creator." See *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer, Musical Criticism*, ed. David Charlton, trans. Martyn Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), p. 1. E.F. Bleiler notes in his introduction to *The Best Tales of Hoffmann* (NY: Dover, 1967) that Hoffmann "was one of the first to recognize the merits of J.S. Bach," p. xiii.

[66] See G.B Bernandt, "V.F. Odoevskii i Betkhoven. Stranitsa iz istorii russkoi betkhoveniany" (Moskva: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1971). Bernandt links Odoevskii's admiration for Beethoven to the composer's popularity among the Decembrists.

[67] ibid., p. 6

unexpected intervention into this dialogue, deviating from most other standard Romantic artists' tales in its approach to Beethoven's biography. The story presents readers with a vision of Beethoven at the end of his life, after he has lost his hearing and begun to experience the symptoms of mental illness—arguably, that is, at the moment of his creative decline. The story takes place in Vienna in 1827, the year of the composer's death. While Odoevskii himself placed great value on Beethoven's final string quartets, many contemporary critics perceived these late compositions "as the fruits of deafness and madness" [как плод[ы] глухоты и безумия].[68] Odoevskii's decision to represent Beethoven's life and creative process at this late moment is striking. By contrast, most Romantic artists' stories contain an element of *Bildung*—of personal growth and self-education, beginning from a young age—with the *Künstlerroman* proper generally recognized as a subgenre of the *Bildungsroman*. One of Hoffmann's most famous stories, "The Golden Flower Pot" [Der goldne Topf], for example, describes the gradual maturation of the student Anselmus into a poet as he acquires new knowledge of the supernatural realm, moving from a position of naivety to one of wisdom and understanding. "Sebastian Bach" falls into this category as well—at least structurally—as it traces Sebastian's discovery of his musical gifts and his gradual maturation under the guidance of his mentor, Albrecht. By contrast, "Beethoven's Last Quartet" introduces us to a Beethoven already past his creative prime, a sick man who plays a piano with silent keys and mistakes water for wine. The element of *Bildung* in most Romantic artists' stories is what allows for a thorough exploration of the given artform: in "The Golden Flower Pot," for example, it is through Anselmus's education in the art of poetry that Hoffmann reveals the vital link between poetry and the irrational, as this education takes the form of Anselmus's gradual abandonment of his ordinary rational life as a student. Why, then, would Odoevskii choose to examine the art of musical composition by depicting the greatest of all Romantic composers at the end of his life, already enfeebled and half-mad?

If one of Odoevskii's goals in *Russian Nights* is to stage the problem of the thought/expression binary, then Beethoven's deafness provides a unique historical test case for what happens when an artist ceases to be able to perceive the external expression of their own creative vision. Beethoven cannot hear the music he creates. Deaf and half-mad, the late Beethoven, like Piranesi in "Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi," is positioned to give expression to that threatening intersection between insanity and artistic creation which results from an excessive reliance on inner vision. As we have seen, Piranesi, like Cypriano, is placed closer to madness than art on the implied spectrum of *Russian Nights*. Beethoven is Piranesi's more ambivalent double, just as Bach is Cypriano's. The narrative of "Beethoven's Last Quartet" leaves open the possibility that the composer's late string quartets truly are works of genius; yet the threat of egoism and megalomania which overtook Piranesi lurks in the Beethoven story as well. Again, madness appears as the possible result of artistic inspiration which partakes too much of subjective thought and not enough of objective expression.

The late Beethoven is in many ways a perfect figure for artistic egoism. The composer's late period includes several piano sonatas and string quartets, the *Missa solemnis,* and the Ninth Symphony (Odoevskii's favorite piece by Beethoven). These works, written during the period of his life when Beethoven was already completely deaf, are more abstract and technically difficult than Beethoven's earlier compositions. Music theorists have long interpreted these works as the result of Beethoven's total detachment from the outside world, his retreat into his own inner

[68] See the notes to "Beethoven's Last Quartet" in *Literaturnye pamiatniki: Russkie nochi* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975), pp. 287-289.

self.[69] Perhaps the most famous advocate of this viewpoint is Adorno, who in his essay fragment "Spätstil Beethovens" (1937) argues that Beethoven, in his final decade, withdrew entirely from communication with external society and, in his compositions, offered a negation of that social order.[70] The abstractness and difficulty of these late works, especially in contrast to the representational character of the preceding "heroic" period, with its clear statements on Napoleon and the revolutionary spirit, baffled European audiences. From direct engagement with the social and political world around him, Beethoven appeared to have retreated into an inner world of his own. The musical expression of this inner world sounded to many like the formless outbursts of an insane imagination.

Odoevskii structures the narrative of "Beethoven's Last Quartet" to foreground the gap between Beethoven's creative vision and the understanding (or lack thereof) of his audience. The story both begins and ends by relating the thoughts and commentary of perplexed outside observers: first the group of musicians who are attempting to play Beethoven's new quartet, and whose astonished reaction to the music is related by the narrator; and finally, the crowd at the ball who briefly and dispassionately discuss the news that Beethoven has died. Rather than entering directly into Beethoven's life, we find that our understanding of the composer and his aesthetic activity is mediated by the opinions of a bewildered Viennese high society. Similarly, the fictional student Louisa, a device to prompt Beethoven's self-reflection and to be the passive recipient of his confessional discourse on music, is unable to understand her master's explanation of his creative process and the source of his inspiration. The mentor/student relationship is central to most *Bildungsromane* and is premised upon mutual understanding; here, that relationship is disrupted, again foregrounding a discord between idea and expression.

The negative impression that Beethoven's final quartet produces on Viennese musical society and on Louisa suggests that the composition may indeed be an eruption of pure noise, the abstract reflection of Beethoven's solipsistic "exile" into the depths of his own mind; that, like the false Piranesi in the cycle's first story, Beethoven in his later years is closer to madness than true art. And yet the situation in "Beethoven's Last Quartet" is more ambivalent than in the Piranesi story. Significantly, the critiques that the musicians at the beginning of the Beethoven story level against the quartet recall the very ideals of Romantic music as described in Hoffmann's 1810 review of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* and, a few years later, in his essay "Beethoven's Instrumental Music." While these texts concern Beethoven's earlier pieces (Hoffmann died in 1822, before the most significant of Beethoven's late works were published), the characterization of the string quartet in "Beethoven's Last Quartet" clearly echoes Hoffmann's analysis.

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[69] Summarizing the viewpoints of several music critics of the 20th century, Stephen Rumph writes, "The abstraction of the late works, coupled with the composer's total deafness during his last decade, raised the suspicion that Beethoven had detached himself entirely from the outer world. Many, if not most, listeners would probably still agree with J.W.N. Sullivan's claim from 1927 that 'the regions within which Beethoven the composer now worked were, to an unprecedented degree, withdrawn and sheltered from his outer life. His deafness and solitariness are almost symbolic of his complete retreat into his inner self.' Donald Jay Grout canonized this view in his famous textbook: 'By 1816, Beethoven had resigned himself to a soundless world of tones that existed only in his mind.'" See Stephen Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works* (University of California Press, 2004), p. 3.

[70] See Theodor Adorno, *Beethoven. The Philosophy of Music*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Polity Press, 1998), pp. 123-161. Edward Said, summarizing Adorno's thesis in his own monograph on late style, writes, "[Beethoven's] late works constitute a form of exile." See Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), p. 8.

In Odoevskii's story, the Viennese musicians offer the following three critiques of the unnamed string quartet. First, they perceive that Beethoven's music has become formless, spontaneous, and non-referential: "Gone was the charm of an original melody, full of poetic concepts" (123) [Исчезла прелесть оригинальной мелодии, полной поэтических замыслов] (1:118). Rather than conveying deliberate "poetic designs" [поэтические замыслы] the quartet is comprised of impulsive "formless outbursts" [безобразные порывы]. Second, they dislike the music's reliance on counterpoint: "the artistic touch had been replaced by the painstaking pedantry of an inept counterpointist" (123) [художническая отделка превратилась в кропотливый педантизм бездарного контрапунктиста] (1:118), a musical technique to which Beethoven devoted himself with special focus during the period of his deafness, and which was uncommon in most Romantic music, being more characteristic of the Baroque. And finally, Beethoven's consonant harmonies appear to have given way to dissonance: "the fire that formerly blazed up in his fast allegros and, gradually growing, poured out like burning lava in full, great harmonies had died down amidst incomprehensible dissonances" (123) [огонь, который прежде пылал в его быстрых аллегро и, постепенно усиливаясь, кипучею лавою разливался в полных, огромных созвучиях—погас среди непонятных диссонансов] (1:118). The overall impression that the quartet creates is one of a lack of understanding of the principles of modern musical composition: "Everywhere there were immature, vain attempts to create effects that do not exist in music" (123) [Везде ученическое, недостигающее стремление к эффектам, не существующим в музыке] (1:118).

The accusations of impulsivity and disorder in Beethoven's quartet recall the problem of thought without proper expression, an excess of pure *mysl'* without concern for *vyrazhenie,* that we first encountered in "Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi." However, these accusations also echo Hoffmann's two most famous pieces of musical criticism, texts which helped to shape the understanding of Romantic music that emerged in Germany in the 1810s. First, the charge of "formlessness," the claim that Beethoven's quartet lacks "poetic designs," recalls the Romantic valorization of "absolute music" of which Hoffmann was the most ardent early defender. "Absolute music" refers to purely instrumental, wordless music that has no explicit dramatic purpose and is not intended to refer to any aspect of empirical reality: it is internally self-referential and does not convey extra-musical ideas. One of the most famous passages from Hoffmann's review of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* identifies absolute instrumental music as "the most romantic of all the arts—one almost wishes to say the only one that is *purely* romantic."[71] And in "Beethoven's Instrumental Music," Hoffmann elaborates:

> Instrumental music must avoid all senseless joking and triviality, especially where it is intended to be taken as absolute music and not to serve some definite dramatic purpose. It explores the depths of the soul for the presentiments of a joy which, nobler and more beautiful than anything experienced in this narrow world, comes to us from the unknown land; it inflames in our breasts an inner, rapturous life, a more intense expression than is possible through words, which are appropriate only to our limited earthly feelings.[72]

[71] E.T.A. Hoffmann, "Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony" (1810) in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 12 (4 and 11 July 1810), *The Critical Reception of Beethoven's Compositions by His German Contemporaries*, Vol. 2, ed. Wayne M. Senner, trans. Robin Wallace (Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska Press, 2001), p. 96.
[72] E.T.A. Hoffmann, "Beethoven's Instrumental Music" [in *Kreisleriana* I-4], trans. Arthur Ware Locke, *The Music Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1917), p. 132.

Following these statements on the Romantic power of purely instrumental music, in the nineteenth century "It became commonplace to cite Hoffmann as the advocate of absolute music par excellence."[73] According to Hoffmann's interpretation of Beethoven, it is precisely music's distance from ordinary sign systems, its inability to function as a language to convey concrete ideas, that makes it the ideal embodiment of the inexpressible.

The Viennese musicians' claim that Beethoven's quartet displays "the painstaking pedantry of an inept counterpointist" is also striking given that Beethoven's experiments in counterpoint take on a deep significance in Hoffmann's Romantic aesthetics. For Hoffmann, contrapuntal moments in Beethoven's music—though associated with an older, Baroque style—contributed to the works' characteristic unity by repeatedly referring back to and developing the central theme.[74] David Charlton goes so far as to propose that in Hoffmann's *Kreisleriana*, "the Romantic significance of counterpoint is its poetic similarity to the intertwining, mysterious curvilinear forms found in nature" – in other words, counterpoint comes to reflect the inner structure of the natural world.[75]

Finally, the criticism that Beethoven's former "fiery" harmonies had died down into "incomprehensible dissonances" [погас среди непонятных диссонансов] recalls certain moments from Hoffmann's review of the *Fifth Symphony*, even though this criticism concerns a quartet that was composed fifteen years after Symphony No. 5. It is especially characteristic of Hoffmann's writings about Beethoven to use images of fire, flames, and burning to describe the effects of his music; yet Hoffmann does not see "the fire that formerly blazed up in his fast allegros" (огонь, который прежде пылал в его быстрых аллегро) as incompatible with dissonance. On the contrary, in the review of the *Fifth Symphony* Hoffmann describes moments of dissonance as essential to Beethoven's work, claiming that they reflect sublime emotional states: "The heavy strokes of this dissonance, sounding like a strange, frightening voice, excite terror of the extraordinary—the fear of spirits."[76] For Hoffmann, dissonance has a place within the wider unified harmony of Beethoven's musical world.

It is worth dwelling on these surprising overlaps between Hoffmann's well-known reviews of Beethoven's early works and the criticisms the Viennese musicians level against the late works in "Beethoven's Last Quartet" for a few reasons. First, this overlap establishes Odoevskii's engagement with broader Romantic musical aesthetics, particularly Hoffmann's, within the Beethoven story. Secondly, it sets up an important irresolution that marks the story as

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[73] See the introduction to *Music and Literature in German Romanticism*, ed. Siobhan Donovan and Robin Elliott (Rochester: Camden House, 2004), p. xiv. Werner Keil's essay in the same volume, however, contends that Hoffmann's own fictional writings place a greater value on vocal music performed by female singers than on purely instrumental music. See Keil, "The Voice from the Hereafter: E.T.A. Hoffmann's Ideal of Sound and Its Realization in Early Twentieth-Century Electronic Music," *Music and Literature in German Romanticism*, pp. 143-162. In *Die Idee der absoluten Musik*, Carl Dahlhaus traces the belief that absolute music "entails a quasi-religious faith in the ability of pure instrumental music to reveal profound truths" back to German Romanticism (qtd. in Donovan and Elliott, p. xvi).

[74] Of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, Hoffmann writes, "Completely apart from the fact that the contrapuntal treatment shows deep study of the art, it is also the transitional passages and the continual references to the principal theme that show how the master did not simply conceive the whole, with all its characteristic features, within his spirit, but thought it through as well." See Hoffmann, "Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony," p. 103.

[75] See Charlton, "Introduction to *Kreisleriana*," *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer, Musical Criticism*, ed. David Charlton, trans. Martyn Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), p. 37.

[76] Hoffmann, "Review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony," p. 106

a whole: it is never quite clear whether Beethoven is truly mad or enlightened; whether his final quartets are successful or grating; whether they represent a departure from his early works, or a continuation.[77] And finally, the possibility that the musicians find fault with precisely those elements of Beethoven's work that reveal his genius underscores the theme of a misalignment between the creative ideal of a musical composition, on the one hand, and the effect of its embodied performance, on the other.

Beethoven expands on this latter possibility in his dialogue with Louisa following the disastrous performance. The reason that Viennese society cannot properly appreciate his music, Beethoven claims, is a problem of transmission: the composition that Beethoven conceives in his imagination must undergo several stages of mediation in the physical world before it reaches the listener, and each successive stage increases the possibility of a fatal error. Beethoven explains to Louisa, "In the earliest days of my youth, I became aware of the abyss that separated thought from expression. Alas, I was never able to express my soul" (126) [От самых юных лет я увидел бездну, разделяющую мысль от выражения. Увы, никогда я не мог выразить души своей] (1:121). To "express one's soul" is one of the chief desires of Romanticism, born out of a need to transcend the limits of individual subjectivity. Beethoven's fantasy of unmediated communion with the Other is the quintessential Romantic fantasy; and, as always, it is the reality of the material world that gets in the way—the artist's need to transmit his thought through the embodied form of the artwork. In the case of a musical composition, this transmission undergoes several stages. First, the work must be transferred from the composer's imagination to the sheet of paper; then a group of performers must read the notes on the paper, a stage that allows for mistakes on the part of each individual musician; next, the performers must play these notes on their instruments, material objects that introduce additional room for error: "'Here, a melody was lost because it had not occurred to a lowly craftsman to put in an extra valve; there, an intolerable bassoonist made me rewrite a whole symphony because his bassoon couldn't play a couple of bass notes'" (127) [Там пропала мелодия оттого, что низкий ремесленник не придумал поставить лишнего клапана; там несносный фаготист заставляет меня переделывать целую симфонию оттого, что его фагот не выделывает пары басовых нот…] (1:121). It is only at this final stage that the composition is transferred to the audience. Each stage of transmission introduces an additional level of embeddedness in the physical world that further widens the gap between thought and expression. This is the same material challenge to expression that we see in the Piranesi story—how can wood and stone be made commensurate to the fantastic edifices in Piranesi's imagination?—and which we will see again, partially resolved, in "Sebastian Bach."

The ailing Beethoven's response to this epistemological gap—between the music he hears in his mind, and the music others hear when his compositions are performed—is to alter the very foundations of musical composition. The composer reveals to Louisa that he plans to

[77] Given the common division of Beethoven's work into distinct "early" and "late" periods—or, following Adorno, into three successive periods, the third of which represents a total negation of the two preceding periods—the coincidence of Odoevskii's characterization of Beethoven's late string quartets with Hoffmann's description of the early symphonies is remarkable. Claudia Albert, discussing *Russkie nochi* as the primary Russian exemplar of Romantic writing about music, observes that "The Beethoven section partakes conspicuously of the formulae of pathos used by German Romanticism – and of Hoffmann's *Rezension zur 5. Sinfonie* (Review of the 5th Symphony) from 1810," although she does not expand upon the specific ways in which "Poslednii kvartet Betkhovena" draws on Hoffmann's review. See Albert, "Music and Romantic narration," p. 78. Apart from Albert's essay, there appears to have been little discussion of Odoevskii's Beethoven story vis-à-vis Hoffmann's Beethoven writings in either English or Russian scholarship.

change the laws of harmony, to use chords that no one has previously dared to use in music. Desperate to overcome the barrier between the artist's imagination and the embodied form of the artwork, Beethoven asserts that it is only by fundamentally altering the harmonic system that he will be able to engender the composition he hears in his mind in the realm of reality. Within the broader context of Romantic musical aesthetics, however, Beethoven is treading dangerous ground. One of the tenets of Romantic music philosophy holds that the harmonic system is a perfect reflection of the harmony of God's creation—in other words, that harmony is a Romantic hieroglyph for the underlying unity of the natural world: "that music, as the art of vibration, acoustics, and a harmonic system based on the octave (as ordained by nature), could be almost scientifically construed as the art fundamentally closest to that surrounding nature in which true Romanticism was held to be immanent."[78] Beethoven's desire to rewrite the laws of harmony in accordance with the symphony he hears in his own imagination could, then, be read as an impulse to impose his own will in place of God's. Rather than entering into communion with other subjectivities, Beethoven's imagined symphony would thereby replace what Wackenroder's Joseph Berglinger refers to in "The Remarkable Musical Life of the Tone-Poet Joseph Berglinger" as "the indwelling harmony of nature," which proceeds from God.[79]

Although Odoevskii does not explicitly state that Beethoven's desire to rewrite the harmonic system is a transgression, Faust's comments in the frame narrative following the story support the idea that there is something fundamentally lacking in Beethoven's music. Significantly, the philosopher asserts that "'through its wonderful harmony you hear some inharmonious cry'" (130) ['сквозь ее чудную гармонию слышится какой-то нестройный вопль'] (1:125). While moments of *dissonance*, following Hoffmann's reviews, might be considered a characteristic feature of Beethoven's music, one reflecting genuine spiritual experience, the negating terms "inharmonious" and "discordant"—the closest approximations of the term "нестройный" used by Faust—are (unlike "dissonance") only ever used in Romantic aesthetic theory to suggest a troubling lack of unity, a break or severance in the fundamental identity of all things. The "inharmonious cry" [нестройный вопль] that Faust identifies in some of Beethoven's compositions suggests something extraneous, an extra-aesthetic marker of a longing or desire that cannot be successfully translated into art. The reason for this failure, Faust goes on to suggest, is Beethoven's lack of faith in God. Recollecting a discussion with a devotee of Haydn, Faust asserts that Beethoven was incapable of composing truly spiritual music because "'Beethoven did not believe in what Haydn believed'" (131) ['Бетховен не верил тому, чему верил Гайдн'] (1:125). It is Bach who, in the Eighth Night, will reveal the power inherent in replicating the harmonic system as laid out by God.

Beethoven thus appears in Odoevskii's story as an artist of great originality and willpower, whose determined reliance on his own inner vision, in opposition to the accepted norms of the classical harmonic system, is presented ambivalently, as potentially indicative of both artistic genius and transgressive insanity. The image of Beethoven as rebel is of course familiar: Beethoven's early music was often intensely political and deeply intertwined with

[78] See Charlton, "Introduction to *Kreisleriana*," pp. 33-34. Charlton traces this aspect of Romantic musical aesthetics to the work of the physicist Johann Wilhelm Ritter, who speculated that "the vibrations we can see in a length of cord, giving off their notes, might merely exist as part of a phenomenon leading to infinitely larger vibrations and—to humans—unperceived notes. 'The world revolving might create such a note; the revolution round the sun, a second one…Here one arrives at the idea of a colossal music, of which our small one is but an important allegory,'" p. 35.

[79] In *Outpourings of an Art-loving Friar*, trans. Edward Mornin (Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1975), p. 118.

revolutionary Romanticism.[80] Grigorii Bernandt notes that, for Odoevskii as for many young men of the 1820s, Beethoven was a symbol of revolutionary struggle.[81] Such was the image of Beethoven popularized by the Decembrists—and it is perhaps possible to perceive, in the aging Beethoven's doomed revolt against God's harmonic system in "Beethoven's Last Quartet," an allusion to the failed uprising of 1825, just two years before Beethoven's death. While Odoevskii himself did not participate in the rebellion he had many friends who did, and he was known to be sympathetic to their ideas.[82]

The political dimension of Beethoven's personal mythos inscribes the historicizing approach to temporality that we have observed elsewhere at work in *Russian Nights*. According to this historical model, it is modern man's "sickened" (atheistic and revolutionary) state that inspires a disruption of classical harmonic forms. As in "The Improvvisatore," however, this story about the dangers of modernity is enfolded into a broader, transhistoricist and lapsarian narrative, in which Beethoven's aesthetic rebellion appears as a manifestation of the eternal revolt against divine harmony that is represented in figures like Cain and Faust. We might also read the Viennese musicians' bewildered response to Beethoven's late work within each of these competing models of history and aesthetics. From a teleological and periodizing perspective, the misalignment between the high creative ideal of Beethoven's late work and the disagreeable effect of its embodied performance at a particular moment in history (1827) can be explained as the conflict between an institutionalized and an emerging stage in the evolution of music: put simply, Beethoven is ahead of his time. "Lateness" thus becomes, paradoxically, the grounds for the genesis of a new style. Understood within a transhistoricist framework which perceives artistic genius as universal rather than historically contingent, the reaction of the Viennese pubic is more ambivalent: lateness here comes to mean retreat and spiritual exile, the artist's inability to meaningfully express their inner vision. Odoevskii's own anxieties about his status as a "late" writer of Romanticism are thus inscribed into "Beethoven's Last Quartet" in a way that both complicates and raises the stakes of the dual temporalities introduced in "Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi" and expanded upon in "The Improvvisatore."

Significantly, instances of innovation and transgression—categories which take on distinctly different meanings when considered within *Russian Nights*' two competing historical frameworks—are present in the artistic structure of "Beethoven's Last Quartet" as well. In terms of genre, "Beethoven's Last Quartet" represents a startling amalgam of biography, Romantic art novella, music theory, and philosophical dialogue. Rather than representing Beethoven's life in terms of artistic maturation, *Bildung*, or hagiography, the text presents us with an image of Beethoven in 1827, driven half mad by the loss of his hearing – as Faust says, a "diseased soul." The story itself, like Beethoven's late music, lacks any underlying principle of harmony. What is dominant in its composition, as in much of *Russian Nights*, is discourse: the constant layering of different, conflicting points of view, the dialogic engagement of multiple subjectivities. It is for this reason that the story opens not with Beethoven, but with the Viennese performers who do not understand his new quartet, and closes with an outsider's unconcerned perspective on his death. Beethoven himself can only give voice to his ideas in the form of a dialogue, by

[80] Stephen Rumph asserts that even Beethoven's final period can be interpreted as highly political, and that, despite its claims to extra-referentiality, absolute music was often politically motivated. See Rumph, *Beethoven after Napoleon: Political Romanticism in the Late Works*.
[81] See G.B. Bernandt, "V.F. Odoevskii—muzykant," *Vladimir Odoevskii. Muzykal'no-literaturnoe nasledie* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe iz'stvo, 1956), pp. 5-75.
[82] For a discussion of Odoevskii's ties to Decembrism, see Cornwell, pp. 179-183.

presenting his thoughts aloud to Louisa, whose sole function is to serve as a passive interlocutor. Yet unlike some of the other, more positively marked moments of polyphony in *Russian Nights*, the dialogic nature of "Beethoven's Last Quartet" takes on a negative quality: the dissonance never resolves into harmony. Viennese musical society remains perplexed by Beethoven's music; Louisa fails to grasp what Beethoven reveals to her, and continues to perceive him only as a pitiable, dying man. Our perception of Beethoven is mediated through the uncomprehending eyes of those who do not understand him, in order to emphasize the potential failure of both music and words to convey one person's subjective experience to another. Here the interconnectedness of Odoevskii's theories of musical composition and discourse, of counterpoint and literary polyphony, emerges in a way that simultaneously suggests the affordances and deficiencies of both systems.

In "Beethoven's Last Quartet," then, we perceive Odoevskii's attempt to replicate the compositional principles of the represented artform (music) within the form of the representing literary narrative. Like Hoffmann, Odoevskii sees music as an interarts model for literary creation. In contrast to "Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi" and "The Improvvisatore," both the Beethoven story and "Sebastian Bach" seek to borrow forms from the sister artwork they thematize: music emerges as a model for Romantic narrative.

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Whereas "Beethoven's Last Quartet" represents the disruption of musical harmony as a symptom of the irreconcilable divide between thought (*mysl'*) and expression (*vyrazhenie*), "Sebastian Bach" offers an antidotal vision of the "sacred mysteries of harmony" [таинства гармонии] as a potential resolution to this divide. The Bach story thus presents the most positive image of aesthetic creation in *Russian Nights*, and the one that comes closest to modeling a synthesis of the dualities that underly the cycle. In other words, "Sebastian Bach" comes closest to achieving one of the artistic goals of the 1820s—the reconciliation of binaries. The story proclaims the redemptive power of art, and of music in particular, to overcome the abyss between ideal thought and material expression by giving genuine, harmonious form to extra-rational subjective experience. Unlike the cycle's three preceding artists' tales, in "Sebastian Bach" the extra-rational never threatens to become irrational. While some of the story's minor characters perceive Bach and his mentor Albrecht as irrational or even insane, the reader is never left in any doubt that these secondary characters are mistaken, their flawed judgment the result of a limited and worldly understanding. This is because, in "Sebastian Bach," the extra-rational inspiration of the artist is linked directly to God, whose own cosmic creation is the source of musical innovation. Unlike Beethoven, who seeks to recreate the classical harmonic system in the image of his own mind, Bach draws his inspiration directly from the divine harmonies of the external world.[83] Within the dialogic system of the cycle's four artists' tales, Bach thus appears as the more positive obverse of Cypriano, whose poetic improvisations likewise proceeded from

[83] There is a critical tendency to view Bach and Beethoven as opposites. Said, following Adorno, observes that, while both Bach and Beethoven are composers of genius who opened up new pathways for musical composition, Bach's creative labors were always consistent, whereas Beethoven's *oeuvre* is marked by conflict and contradiction. While Beethoven's late works are a refutation of his earlier creative periods, Bach appears as an exemplar of "late works [that] crown a lifetime of aesthetic endeavor […] artistic lateness […] as harmony and resolution." See Said, *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain*, p. 7.

an outside source; in the case of the improvisor, however, this source was demonic rather than divine.

The words "гармония" ("harmony") and "гармонический" ("harmonious") appear twenty-five times in the short text of "Sebastian Bach," far more frequently than anywhere else in *Russian Nights*. The term also takes on a wider set of connotations in this text than elsewhere. In the Bach story, harmony occurs at various related levels of material and spiritual experience. In addition to the principle of musical harmony, wherein a series of chords accompanies and adds depth and complexity to the central melody, the term "harmony" is used in "Sebastian Bach" to indicate family happiness, a righteous life, the interpenetration of religion and art, and, at the most general level, the cosmic unity of all aspects of God's creation. Thus, we are told that the family of musicians into which Sebastian is born "was blessed with piety and love for harmony from above" [чувство религиозное и любовь к гармонии свыше осенили семью Бахов] (1:151); and that the heads of the family's various branches would gather together on one fixed day each year "like the individual sounds of a single chord" [как разрозненные звуки одного и того же созвучия]. Later in the story, Sebastian's own family life with Magdalena emerges in a similar way: Sebastian's apprenticeship at the home of the organ maker Albrecht, where he grows up alongside Albrecht's daughter Magdalena, accustoms his spirit to a harmonious existence: "Magdalena was such a melodious, indispensable sound in that harmony that their very love was born and had passed all its stages almost unnoticed by the young people themselves" (178) [Магдалина была столь стройным, необходимым звуком в этой гармонии, что самая любовь их зародилась, прошла все свои периоды почти незаметно для самих молодых людей] (1:171). On the level of metaphysics as well as domesticity, harmony is paramount: the young Sebastian's vision at the church in Eisenach reveals the underlying harmony of all aspects of the physical world when that world is perceived through religion or art: "Everything here lived a harmonious life, each rainbow-like movement emitted a sound, and each sound was fragrant" (166) [Все здесь жило гармоническою жизнию, звучало каждое радужное движение, благоухал каждый звук, — и невидимый голос внятно произносил таинственные слова религии и искусства] (1:159).

It is precisely this natural tendency of all parts of creation toward harmony that Albrecht discovers in his invention of a new register for the organ: "This observation made it clear to me that everything in this world leads to unity—and that's the way it should be! In each sound we hear the whole chord. Melody is a series of chords. Each sound is nothing else but a full harmony" (171) [это наблюдение озарило мой ум ярким светом: итак, подумал я, все в мире приводится к единству—так и должно быть! Во всяком звуке мы слышим целый аккорд. Мелодия есть ряд аккордов; каждый звук есть не иное что, как полная гармония] (1:163). Albrecht calls his new register "mystery"—because, he says, this register (a particular combination of stops in the pipes of an organ) conceals within itself an important secret: "и этот регистр я назвал мистерией: ибо, действительно, в нем скрывается важное таинство." This secret is precisely the secret of harmony, "таинство гармонии." Odoevskii's footnote states that Albrecht's new register, which he calls "mystery," is a register that actually exists in modern organs, called "mixtures."[84] This register is used to combine multiple "voices" within the organ into a chorus—that is, to bring multiple musical strands into a single unified harmony.

[84] Odoevskii's footnote reads, "In current organs this word has transformed into a prosaic expression: Mixturen" [Это слово в нынешних органах превратилось в прозаическое выражение: Mixturen] (1:163). Odoevskii appears to have taken some artistic license here. In fact, in Baroque organ registration, a "mixture" refers not to a single specific register, but to a type of compound organ stop that contains several ranks of pipes. Mixtures were not

The nature of Albrecht's invention reflects the fundamental difference between the approach to musical harmony in "Sebastian Bach" and "Beethoven's Last Quartet." Odoevskii's Beethoven dreamed of altering the laws of harmony and of inventing entirely new chords, never before heard in music. Beethoven's invention proves unrealizable—possibly because it represents a transgression, a desire on the part of the artist to supplant God's vision and replace it with his own. By contrast, Sebastian's mentor succeeds in fundamentally altering the construction of the pipe organ, a feat that, as his fellow organ maker Bandeler argues, "'goes against the fundamental principles of our craft'" ['которое противно первым основаниям нашего мастерства'] (1:164). Albrecht's response to Bandeler is revealing: "'Yet, it does not go against nature!'" (172) ['И, однако же, не противно природе!']. Albrecht's addition of a new register to the organ is not equivalent to Beethoven's desire to change the laws of harmony: the new register gives expression to an aspect of the harmonic system that God himself created, and which is therefore natural even if heretofore undiscovered. Albrecht points out to his skeptical fellow organ makers that the "mysteries of harmony" [таинства гармонии] are immanent not in the physical structure of the wooden organ, but in each man's soul. The task of the musician or the maker of an instrument is to find a mode of external expression for that inner harmony which proceeds from God.

The idea that there is a "mystery" [таинство] or "secret" [тайна] concealed within the laws of musical harmony is repeated often throughout "Sebastian Bach." Early in the narrative, the young Sebastian presses his music teachers to "reveal the secrets of harmony to him" [Тщетно выспрашивал он у своих учителей тайны гармонии] (1:160); that is, to explain why there is nothing in physics or mathematics to indicate why certain sounds are pleasing to the human ear while others are disagreeable, or why certain chords inspire ecstasy in the listener while others prompt disgust. Thus, the "secrets of harmony" can be understood to refer to the problem that is at the root of all transcendental philosophy: how to explain the connection between subjective emotional experience and the world of nature, between the subject's freedom and objective necessity. This is the central question of Romantic aesthetics, which observes that aesthetic pleasure derives from a sensuous experience of the external world while also potentially leading to an intensely subjective emotional experience. Bowie has argued that of all the artforms, music offers the clearest instantiation of this dialectic of Romantic art, since musical works are so clearly reliant on both mathematical necessity (upon which the Western harmonic system is based) and affective experience.[85] Importantly, this synthesis which occurs in music is perceived as inaccessible to philosophical articulation. The subject gains access to the realm of the absolute through music; yet this experience lies beyond either rational understanding or linguistic explanation. It is precisely this sort of extra-rational synthesis through music that Odoevskii has in mind when his characters refer to the "mysteries of harmony."

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invented by a single individual, but developed gradually over time, beginning centuries before the time of Bach. See Barbara Owen, *The Registration of Baroque Organ Music* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1997), for a thorough overview of the history of organ registration.

[85] Bowie explains that "Music can be understood, therefore, as functioning in terms of a kind of dialectical 'identity of opposites.' The mathematical and the affective are both essential to it, but the former is universal, the latter individual. The temptation to use music as the means of access to an absolute which would overcome the division between the mathematically explicable, deterministic nature manifest in the rules of the harmonic series, and the world of affect is apparent in this combination of extremes." See Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, p. 226.

Indeed, not long after Sebastian leaves Bandeler to become Albrecht's assistant, Albrecht explains the glory of music to Sebastian in terms that emphasize its extra-rational, extra-linguistic aspect, its ability to express an otherwise inaccessible spiritual experience:

> But there is still the highest state of man's soul, which he does not share with nature, which eludes the sculptor's chisel, remains unrevealed by the passionate lines of the poet. This is the state when the soul, proud of its victory over nature, in the full blaze of its glory, grows humble before the Almighty and, suffering bitterly, yearns to prostrate itself at His throne and, like a stranger amid the luxurious delights of a foreign land, sighs for his fatherland. People call the feeling that springs from this lofty state of the soul *the ineffable*. *Music* is the only language of this feeling. In music, in this highest sphere of human art, man becomes oblivious to the storms of his earthly wanderings. In it, as at the peak of the Alps, there radiates a cloudless sun of harmony. Only the inexplicit, boundless sounds embrace the infinite soul of man; only they can unite the elements of joy and sorrow, sundered by the fall of man; only they can rejuvenate the heart and transport us into the innocent first cradle of the first innocent man. (176)
>
> Но есть еще высшая степень души человека, которой он не разделяет с природою, которая ускользает из-под резца ваятеля, которую не доскажут пламенные строки стихотворца, —та степень, где душа, гордая своею победой над природою, во всем блеске славы, смиряется пред вышнею силою, с горьким страданием жаждет перенести себя к подножию ее престола и, как странник среди роскошных наслаждений чуждой земли, вздыхает по отчизне; чувство, возбуждающееся на этой степени, люди назвали *невыразимым*; единственный язык сего чувства—*музыка*: в этой высшей сфере человеческого искусства человек забывает о бурях земного странствования; в ней, как на высоте Альпов, блещет безоблачное солнце гармонии; одни ее неопределенные, безграничные звуки обнимают беспредельную душу человека; лишь они могут совокупить воедино стихии грусти и радости, разрозненные падением человека, —лишь ими младенчествует сердце и переносит нас в первую невинную колыбель первого невинного человека. (1:168-169)

Music, in Albrecht's formulation, is the "language" of the absolute, a spiritual realm that lies beyond the reconciliation of necessity and freedom. Music gives expression to that infinite expanse of the soul which is inaccessible to rational understanding or articulation. Significantly, this ineffable spiritual experience here takes on an explicitly religious dimension. According to Albrecht, music is generated through an inexpressible longing in the soul—a longing for God. The way in which the laws of harmony are here grounded in Christian faith, and in the belief that musical harmony derives from and is an expression of God's will, is what most clearly distinguishes Odoevskii's Bach from Odoevskii's Beethoven. In "Beethoven's Last Quartet," Beethoven's late music possesses a worldliness and a sense of proud individuality that compromises its harmonious form.

We have seen how the threats to musical harmony in Beethoven's late quartets help to shape the structure of "Beethoven's Last Quartet" and the Sixth Night. In a similar way, the

underlying harmony which Odoevskii presents as the indisputable foundation of Bach's compositions informs the structure of "Sebastian Bach" and the Eighth Night. In a marked contrast to the Beethoven story, "Sebastian Bach" follows many of the traditional forms and patterns of the Romantic art novella. As we have seen, this genre derives from the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*: in the art novellas of Novalis, Tieck, Wackenroder, and Hoffmann, the growth and ultimate self-realization of the hero which constitute *Bildung* are given a new *telos* – rather than reconciliation of the individual self with bourgeois reality, the goal of self-realization becomes spiritual transcendence through art.[86] "Sebastian Bach" traces the course of Sebastian's life from birth to old age, focusing especially on the period of his adolescent apprenticeship and on the gradual development of his artistic sensibilities. The narrative is thus centrally concerned with Sebastian's *Bildung* as an artist. Moreover, "Sebastian Bach" replicates many of the features of the Romantic artist's biography as established by Wackenroder and Tieck in *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Kolsterbruders* (1797), in which the narrator, an anonymous friar, presents a series of biographical sketches about historical painters, most prominently Raphael and Albrecht Dürer, whose lives are taken as a reflection and exegesis of their art. These sketches have a marked hagiographic quality and are derived from Wackenroder and Tieck's personal experience of the artists' paintings rather than from factual accounts of their biographies.[87] The Bach story is likewise semi-hagiographic in its idealization of its subject, and the storyteller himself informs his audience (Faust's soul-seekers) that the tale is based not on the facts of Bach's biography, but on the emotional experience produced by his music. In fact, the frame narrator, a collector of rare fragments relating to the lives and works of artists, presents Bach's "biography" in such terms that one could easily believe he had just read the *Herzensergießungen* himself. The narrative structure of "Sebastian Bach" is thus devoid of any "unharmonious" irregularities or contradictions, at least in the beginning.

The only contradiction that emerges is the narrator's assertion that he will be able to verbally communicate this biography to his audience. This assertion is self-contradictory given that the biography is presented as the exegesis of a musical oeuvre defined by its ability to give

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[86] In *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton UP, 1978), Martin Swales defines *Bildung* as "the self-realization of the individual in his wholeness," p. 14. Swales goes on to write that "the Bildungsroman operates with a tension between a concern for the sheer complexity of individual potentiality on the one hand and a recognition on the other that practical reality—marriage, family, career—is a necessary dimension of the hero's self-realization, albeit one that by definition implies a delimitation, indeed, a constriction, of the self," p. 29. In an essay on the Romantic Bildungsroman included in the collection *Romantic Prose Fiction*, Manfred Engel describes the "*Bildungsroman* in the High Romantic mode" (of which the principal German example is Novalis' *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*) as an attempt to "re-enchant the world" through the hero's transcendence. See Manfred Engel, "Variants of the Romantic 'Bildungsroman' (with a short note on the 'artist novel')," pp. 276-277.

[87] Richard Littlejohns discusses the stories' hagiographic quality in "Iniquitous Innocence: The Ambiguity of Music in the *Phantasien uber die Kunst* (1799)," *Music and Literature in German Romanticism*, ed. Siobhan Donovan and Robin Elliott (Rochester: Camden House, 2004), pp. 3-4. Wackenroder's biographical sketches of Raphael and Dürer are almost entirely fictionalized. The image of these artists that emerges in stories like "Raphael and the Apprentice" and "In Pious Memory of Our Revered Forebear Albrecht Dürer, By an Art-Loving Friar" are based on Wackenroder's interpretation of the feelings behind their respective artworks. In his introduction to the 1975 English translation of *Outpourings*, Edward Mornin writes, "What at all times determines Wackenroder's treatment [of these artists] is neither scholarly respect for his source materials nor a critical reappraisal of them, but his desire to illustrate through biographical sketches or characterizations of individual artworks his notion of the artist as an inspired being, and of art as a manifestation of the Divine." See Mornin, *Outpourings of an Art-loving Friar*, p. xiii. Neil Cornwell notes on the basis of "Beethoven's Last Quartet" and "Sebastian Bach" that "Odoevsky's conception of artistic 'biography' appears to be particularly close to that of Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder." See Cornwell, p. 48.

form to the ineffable and extra-linguistic. If Bach's music manifests aspects of subjective experience that go beyond articulation in language, then how can this text claim to articulate the evolution of Bach's inner life on the basis of that music? The narrator himself acknowledges this contradiction midway through the story. After reiterating that the only way to truly learn about the "events in Sebastian's inner life" [происшествия внутренней жизни Себастияна] is to play all of Bach's music from beginning to end, the narrator reflects on the difficult task he has set for himself in attempting to narrativize that inner life:

> It is a pity that my talkative old Albrecht is dead: at least he related what Sebastian felt. When Sebastian listened to Albrecht, he always thought that he was listening to himself. Verbal language was not his chief medium of communication—he expressed himself only through the sounds of an organ. And you cannot imagine how difficult it is to translate from this divine, infinite language into our language, which is limited and mixed with the clay of life. Sometimes I have to write a volume of commentary to four notes, and yet these four notes speak more clearly to one who knows how to understand them than my whole volume. (179)
>
> Жаль, что умер мой говорливый старик Албрехт: он по крайней мере рассказывал то, что чувствовал Себастиян; когда Себастиян слушал Албрехта, то всегда думал, что себя слушает; сам же словесным языком говорил мало, —он говорил только звуками органа. А вы не можете себе вообразить, как трудно с этого небесного, беспредельного языка переводить на наш сжатый, смешанный с прахом жизни язык. Иногда мне на четыре ноты приходится писать целый том комментарий, и все-таки эти четыре ноты яснее моего тома говорят для того, кто умеет понимать их. (1:172)

The claim that the character of Albrecht functions, at least in part, as a device for giving verbal expression to Sebastian's inner life—which Sebastian himself is able to communicate only through music—is particularly interesting given that Albrecht speaks primarily in lengthy philosophical monologues. The narrator thus suggests that philosophical discourse comes closest of all discursive modes to approximating the content of music. And yet the discursive mode chosen by the eccentric speaker to convey the spirit of Bach to his listeners is that of narrative, not philosophy. Somehow, literature must be made to do this work: and yet the narrator's admission, "It is a pity that my talkative old Albrecht is dead," suggests a crisis in the text's confidence that it will be able to perform the task of faithfully communicating the spiritual life of Sebastian Bach.

It is worth now examining more closely this opposition between music and words as it was conceived in Romantic theory. The Bach narrator's claim that music represents a purer expression of the divine than does verbal language, and that the spiritual content of music exceeds what is expressible in rational linguistic terms ("Иногда мне на четыре ноты приходится писать целый том комментарий"), reflects the Romantic valorization of the non-representational and non-conceptual form of music as a means of transcending objective knowledge. As we have already seen, it is "absolute" or purely instrumental music that is taken to afford this sort of transcendence. As the narrator of "Sebastian Bach" suggests, words are

"limited and mixed with the dust of life" [сжатый, смешанный с прахом жизни язык], a judgment that extends to voiced music.

The opposition between purely instrumental music and music that is sung becomes a central preoccupation of "Sebastian Bach" when the Italian singer Francesco enters the lives of Sebastian and his half-Italian wife Magdalena. Early in the story Albrecht cautions Sebastian against the compromised beauty of Magdalena's singing voice, stating, "'you sing too often with Magdalena: the voice abounds in human passions; unperceptibly, in the moments of purest inspiration, sounds of another, impure world break into it; the human voice still carries the imprint of the first sinful wail!'" (179) ['ты слишком часто поешь с Магдалиною: голос исполнен страстей человеческих; незаметно—в минуту самого чистого вдохновения—в голос прорываются звуки из другого, нечистого мира; на человеческом голосе лежит еще печать первого грешного вопля!'] (1:171). The text thus sets up an opposition between the singing voice, which is prone to expressions of passion and other corrupted earthly emotions, and the voiceless music of the organ which, as Albrecht describes it to Sebastian, "'is not a live instrument, and therefore is not privy to delusions of your will: it is eternally quiet, impassive, like nature itself. Its smooth harmonies do not obey the whims of worldly delights'" (179) ['не есть живое орудие; но зато и непричастен заблуждениям нашей воли: он вечно спокоен, бесстрастен, как бесстрастна природа; его ровные созвучия не покоряются прихотям земного наслаждения'] (1:171). "[E]ternally quiet, impassive, like nature itself" – here a new idea begins to emerge in the narrative. This idea suggests that the sense of the divine absolute which is reflected in and experienced through harmony requires a sacrifice: a renunciation of participation in daily human life, a rejection of "worldly delights." Indeed, we see that Sebastian soon becomes incapable of experiencing the fullness of human passions and emotions. The narrator states, "[Sebastian] became the church organ raised to the level of man" (181) [Словом, он сделался церковным органом, возведенным на степень человека] (1:173); he is impassive, serene to the point of apathy. Reading this description of Sebastian's inhuman lack of feeling and his resemblance to a "human church organ," the reader cannot help but recall the emotional alienation of Cypriano, whose poetic improvisations in "The Improvvisatore" resembled a mechanical process rather than the true passion of inspiration. In "Sebastian Bach" this lack of inner passion is given a positive valence, as a sign of Bach's total reliance on the will of God. And yet the recollection of "The Improvvisatore," which Faust recites just two Nights before "Sebastian Bach," suggests that there may be something problematic in Sebastian's emotional apathy.

Francesco's bold and passionate singing voice presents a threat to the serene harmony of Sebastian's music as well as the harmony of his family life. The Italian singer first appears in the family's local church just as the parishioners raise their voices in perfect harmony with the sounds of the organ. Voiced song is complementary to instrumental music so long as it does not overpower or alter that music by introducing elements that are external to it; this is why Magdalena is able to sing in harmonious accompaniment with Sebastian's playing. Francesco's voice, however, does not harmonize with the others or with the music of the organ:

> In the midst of the signing Bach had noticed that the chorus had been joined by a beautiful, pure voice that sounded very strange, and unlike the usual singing. Now it broke out like a cry of pain; now it was sharp, like the wild shouting of a joyous crowd; now it seemed to be bursting out of the dark recesses of the soul; in short, this was not a voice of reverence or prayer—there was something tempting in it

> […] it destroyed the general harmony […] the passionate voice proudly floated above all the others, and, it seemed, defiled every harmony. (183)
>
> В средине пения Бах заметил, что к общему хору присоединился голос прекрасный, чистый, но в котором было что-то странное, что-то непохожее на обыкновенное пение: часто он то заливался, как вопль страдания, то резко раздавался, как буйный возглас веселой толпы, то вырывался как будто из мрачной пустыни души, —словом, это был голос не благоговения, не молитвы, в нем было что-то соблазнительное […] оно нарушало общую гармонию […] страстный, болезненный голос гордо возносился над всем хором и, казалось, осквернял каждое созвучие. (1:175)

In "Sebastian Bach," musical harmony is a form of prayer, a peaceful meditation upon the divine harmony of creation. Nature is a reflection of the will of God; the organ reflects nature, "eternally quiet, impassive, like nature itself"; Bach is himself an extension of the organ, "the organ raised to the level of a man." Nature, the music of the organ, Bach—all exist in perfect harmony, all are perfect manifestations of the general harmony of God's world. Francesco interrupts this harmony with his earthly and individual passion. His voice disrupts the worshipful music of the church, and soon his presence in the Bach household disrupts the peaceful harmony of Sebastian's family life as he awakens passion and desire in the heart of Magdalena.

The opposition between sung and wordless music that becomes so vital to the theory of music put forward in "Sebastian Bach" has an important precedent in the works of Hoffmann. We have already seen how, in the essay "Beethoven's Instrumental Music," Hoffmann argues for the superiority of absolute music on the basis that words "are appropriate only to our limited earthly feelings."[88] The disjunction between the heavenly music of the organ and the sensuous Italian songs that Francesco introduces to Magdalena appears to conform to Hoffmann's ideas as developed in the Beethoven criticism. However, the most important of Hoffmann's texts to consider in a discussion of "Sebastian Bach" is the short story "Rath Krespel" (1818), which provides the epigraph to "Beethoven's Last Quartet." The similarities between these two texts are striking. In Hoffmann's story we find the same schematic distinction drawn between German and Italian music (German music is serene, impassive, coldly mathematical; Italian music is more passionate but less divine)[89]; and this story also features a marriage between a German man and an Italian woman, as the German violinist and luthier Krespel marries an Italian singer named Angela. Furthermore, Krespel's approach to the art of violin making prefigures Albrecht's quest to create the perfect organ: Krespel compulsively takes apart old violins in order to penetrate the "secrets" of their divine sound, just as Albrecht does with pipe organs.

These similarities, which suggest that Odoevskii had "Rath Krespel" in mind while writing "Sebastian Bach," make the differences between the two stories all the more noteworthy. One of the most vital differences is the presence in "Rath Krespel" of a symbolic synthesis between these two opposing sides: that is, between divine and mathematically precise German instrumental music on the one hand, and earthly and passionate Italian singing on the other. This synthesis takes the form of Antonia, the daughter of Krespel and Angela. Antonia is also a singer, and her voice is so transcendently beautiful that its effect on the listener is almost

[88] Hoffmann, "Beethoven's Instrumental Music," p. 132

[89] In "V.F. Odoevskii—muzykant," Grigorii Bernandt discusses Odoevskii's generally low opinion of Italian music, which he viewed as "zvukoobol'stitel'noi" [sound-seductive]. See Bernandt, "V.F. Odoevskii—muzykant," p. 60.

supernatural. Antonia's singing far surpasses that of every other vocalist in Europe; one of her father's neighbors states that "beside this voice and the peculiar, deep, soul-stirring impression which the execution made upon me, the singing of the most celebrated artists whom I had ever heard seemed to me feeble and void of expression."[90] Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Antonia's voice, however, is that it has a twin in the world of material objects: Krespel's most treasured violin. When Antonia hears her father playing upon this violin for the first time, she exclaims, "'Why, that's me!—now I shall sing again.'"[91] Antonia herself can no longer sing without risking her health due to a defect in her lungs (the same defect, it turns out, which makes her voice so remarkable in the first place); but the violin "sings" for her. When she dies, the violin miraculously breaks in half. Thus, Antonia's voice takes on the pure and uncorrupted qualities of the musical instrument, while the violin itself seems to possess a living voice: Krespel admits to the narrator that "…this senseless thing which only gives signs of life and sound as I make it, often speaks to me in a strange way of itself."[92] In the mystical connection between Antonia and the violin, Hoffmann creates a vision of perfect synthesis between the heavenly and transcendent and the earthly and embodied.

Of course, this synthesis is not only fleeting—Antonia dies after finally giving in to the urge to sing, which causes her lungs to give out—it is also unrepresentable. Antonia's voice occupies a strange place within Hoffmann's narrative, always closer to absence than presence. The first-person narrator, a visitor to the town where Krespel and his daughter live, never witnesses Antonia singing for himself: he only ever hears descriptions of her voice from other people. By the time the narrator arrives in H— Antonia has already given up singing, and when he returns to the town at the end of the story it is on the day of her funeral. It is the mere idea of Antonia's voice that preoccupies the narrator, who is haunted by his unfulfilled desire to hear it: "I *must* hear Antonia sing if I was not to pine away in reveries and dim aspirations for want of hearing her."[93] The unrealized desire for Antonia's absent voice is what drives the narrative forward: first in the narrator's quest to hear Antonia sing, and later in his determination to learn from her father the secret of her mysterious song. Thus, in "Rath Krespel" the usual Romantic pattern emerges: the longing after an ideal synthesis that can be neither attained nor fully represented in art generates an artwork around the absent ideal.

Remarkably, in "Sebastian Bach" even the possibility of such a synthesis is absent. The supernatural twinning of Antonia and the violin in "Rath Krespel" suggests that the gaps between the earthly human voice and divine harmony can be resolved. In "Sebastian Bach," these oppositions are too stratified to be overcome. Magdalena can only live one side of her half-German, half-Italian nature. She falls in love with Francesco's songs and with Francesco himself as he awakens something inside her that had lain dormant in her married life with Sebastian. When Francesco departs from Germany for his native country the harmony of the Bach family is ruined forever. Magdalena gradually falls ill and dies, and it is only after her death that Bach realizes there is something fundamental missing from his existence: "Life had granted him everything—enjoyment of art, fame, admirers…everything except life itself […] Half of his soul was dead!" (188-189) [Он все нашел в жизни: наслаждение искусства, славу, обожателей – кроме самой жизни […] Половина души его была мертвым трупом!] (1:181). Following this

[90] E.T.A. Hoffmann, "Rath Krespel," trans. J.T. Bealby, *The Best Tales of Hoffmann*, ed. E.F. Bleiler (NY: Dover, 1967), p. 220.
[91] ibid, p. 234
[92] ibid, p. 222
[93] ibid, p. 223

realization, Sebastian loses the ability to compose music altogether. Lacking inspiration, he perceives the organ as a lifeless mechanical instrument: "His imagination was old and impaired now; it showed him only the keys, pipes, and valves of the organ. Dead and lifeless, they no longer stimulated his interest: the magic light that enveloped them in a rainbow shimmer had faded forever" (189) [одряхлевшее, [воображение его] представляло ему лишь клавиши, трубы, клапаны органа! мертвые, безжизненные, они уж не возбуждали сочувствия: магический свет, проливавший на них радужное сияние, закатился навеки!] (1:182). Once again, the reader recalls Cypriano, who, detached from his imagination and the creative spirit, perceived all of life and art as a dead mechanical process.

However, whereas Cypriano's unfortunate fate is foreseeable within the context of a supernatural narrative that involves the sale of his soul, the powerful impact that Magdalena's death has on Sebastian is surprising. It is only through her death that we discover, alongside Sebastian himself, that the seemingly perfect harmony of Sebastian's life which is reflected in his music might be dependent upon something external to itself, something earthly and human. If we read "Sebastian Bach" against "Rath Krespel," then it becomes apparent that what is so distinctive about Odoevskii's story is that the hero starts from what appears to be a position of wholeness and fulfillment—from his earliest childhood Sebastian lives in harmony with his music and with God—and then suddenly, at the end of his life, is confronted with the possibility that this harmony is incomplete; or worse, that it is deficient, that there is something necessary to human life which is missing in it. This is not a story that follows the Romantic pattern of a search for a lost or absent ideal unity. Instead, "Sebastian Bach" begins from a premise of perfect synthesis (absolute harmony) and then discovers that this harmony alone is not enough. The result of Sebastian's lifelong serenity and impassive commitment to his art is total detachment from the world of human emotion. His only tie to that world is Magdalena; when she dies, he loses the ability to experience inspiration altogether.

This unexpected revelation in the theory of music put forward by "Sebastian Bach" is fundamentally connected to the question of the story's narrative structure. More specifically, it is bound up with Odoevskii's examination of the ways in which music's unique capacities for representing extra-rational aspects of subjectivity might inform literature's ability to access and convey subjective experience. Just as Francesco's voice introduces an unharmonious note into the general harmony of Bach's church music, his appearance within Bach's biography introduces an unexpected conflict in what is otherwise a steady account of the Romantic artist's *Bildung*. Structurally it would make sense for "Sebastian Bach" to end immediately before the introduction of Francesco. The tale of Sebastian's evolution into Germany's foremost composer concludes right before Francesco appears. Following the death of Albrecht, the narrator presents us with an account of Sebastian's peaceful and joyful life as a composer and the head of a new family alongside Magdalena. The narrator describes the feeling of religious awe that Sebastian's music inspires in all those who hear it. The narrator concludes this account of Sebastian's life in the years following Albrecht's death by contrasting the dry and technical description of Bach's church music typically offered by biographers and musicologists with the feeling of inexpressible reverence inspired in those who heard Bach play the organ: "That's how these people translate a musician's religious inspiration into their own language!" (182) [Так эти люди переводят на свой язык религиозное вдохновение музыканта!] (1:175). the narrator states in disbelief, referring to the historians and biographers. This judgment marks a clear conclusion to the story of Bach's life as an artist, returning us to the idea with which the narrator began: that the inner life of a musician can only be accessed by listening to his music.

Instead of ending, however, the text resumes (following a line break): "Once, during the service, when Bach was at the organ, completely immersed in the feeling of reverence, and the chorus of voices blended with the magnificent harmonies of the divine instrument, the organist suddenly stopped…" (182) [Однажды во время богослужения Бах сидел за органом весь погруженный в благоговение, и хор присутствовавших сливался с величественными созвучиями священного инструмента. Вдруг органист невольно вздрогнул, остановился…] (1:175). Sebastian stops playing when he hears Francesco's voice. This is the first real *event* in a story that had previously consisted of philosophical monologues, semi-hagiographic biographical details, and theoretical discourses on the principles of harmony. Its status as an event is marked by the declarative "Once" [Однажды]. The remainder of the story is quite different from what has come before. This new section details Francesco's arrival at Sebastian's home; the introduction into that peaceful place of the new and passionate style of Italian music which replaces harmonies with a single overpowering individual voice; the effect that this music has on Magdalena; and the gradual disintegration of Sebastian and Magdalena's relationship following Francesco's departure, culminating in Magdalena's death and Sebastian's fall into despondency.[94]

It is possible to read this unexpected divergence from the story's established tone and pattern in light of the critique of modernity and preoccupation with progress that we have observed running through the textual fabric of *Russian Nights*. The narrator of "Sebastian Bach," reflecting on why modern audiences no longer venerate Bach's music with the same devotion as Bach's own contemporaries, asserts that the experience of modernity precludes the ability to appreciate such divinely harmonious music:

> …[Bach] was faithful to the divine art, and never did an earthly thought or passion burst into his sounds; that is why now, when music has ceased to be a prayer, when it has become an expression of restless passion, a toy for diversion, a lure for vainglory—Bach's music seems cold and lifeless. (181)
>
> …[Бах] везде был верен святыне искусства, и никогда земная мысль, земная страсть не прорывались в его звуки; оттого теперь, когда музыка перестала быть молитвою, когда она сделалась выражением мятежных страстей, забавою праздности, приманкою тщеславия – музыка Баха кажется холодною, безжизненною… (1:173-174)

By contrast, the new style of Italian singing which is represented by Francesco—and which, the narrator notes, is developed in the contemporary era in the music of Rossini—is exciting, passionate, and emotional, more suited to the demands and tastes of the modern age.[95] This

[94] Claudia Albert similarly notes a disparity between the section of "Sebastian Bach" that precedes Francesco's appearance and that which follows, writing, "Odoevskii leaves it to the reader to decide whether to believe the expansive portrait of harmony or the few pages of disillusionment." See Albert, "Music and Romantic narration," p. 79.

[95] Nina Petrunina suggests that "Sebastian Bach" is primarily concerned with the historical development of art. Petrunina observes that the story's musicians can be divided into clear eras of musical development: Sebastian's older brother and Bandeler represent older medieval guild styles of music making; Bach represents the height of Baroque religious music; and Francesco is a representative of the new style of music that originates in Italy. Petrunina writes, "Bach is a composer of a transitional era, freed from the fetters of medieval craft; he perfected the epic principle of religious art, but stopped at the threshold of new music" [Бах – композитор переходной эпохи,

representation of the triumph of modern taste in the Francesco section of "Sebastian Bach" can be taken as an admission on the part of the text that perfect aesthetic harmony is ultimately irreconcilable with modern subjectivities. Bach's music represents the ideal synthesis of man, nature, and God—absolute harmony—yet it ceases to fulfill either its creator or those who hear it performed. Thus, Odoevskii seems to suggest, there is an absolute limit to the power of art, even to the greatest and most divinely inspired artworks. In acknowledging this fact, the text itself departs from its previous "harmonious" structure and introduces entirely new and "unharmonious" narrative elements: a mysterious foreigner, an adultery plot, and the gradual disillusionment of a great artist.

The tension between the two models of history that we have observed running throughout *Russian Nights*—the transhistoricist and the teleological/progressive—thus reaches a high point in "Sebastian Bach." The story opens with the narrator's declaration that "'the poetry of all ages and peoples is one and the same harmonious creation'" (155) ['поэзия всех веков и всех народов есть одно и то же гармоническое произведение'] (1:148)—that every poet and artist in history is engaged in the same "harmonious" artistic undertaking, the creation of the same great and transcendent artwork. For most of the narrative of "Sebastian Bach," the characterization of Sebastian's music conforms to this transhistorical understanding of aesthetic creation. His music is innovative, but this innovation proceeds not from himself, from his own individualistic and historically localized experience; rather, it proceeds from God, whose creation is the eternal pattern upon which all subsequent artworks must be modeled. The disruptive appearance of a new, modern style of music toward the end of "Sebastian Bach," one which is held in low esteem by both Sebastian and the text's narrator, but which seems nevertheless to contain something meaningful that Sebastian's music does not, troubles this transhistorical narrative of aesthetic creation. The apparent perfection of a given style or artwork becomes conditional, a product of and response to the tastes of the age, subject to reevaluation in later historical periods. As such, inspiration that flows from the divine patterns of God's creation, such as Bach's, proves potentially no more transcendent or durable than inspiration that proceeds from the inner self, such as Beethoven's.

The statement on aesthetics that emerges from the culminating tale of *Russian Nights*' four artists' stories, then, is ultimately as ambivalent as those that preceded it. "Sebastian Bach" continues the cycle's investigation into the nature of artistic inspiration, without finally offering a conclusive theory of aesthetics. While the power of the "mysteries of harmony" that the story asserts supports an aesthetic model which views creation as derived from the external patterns of God's universe, tensions are introduced into this model in the later parts of the story. However, the particular triumph of "Sebastian Bach" has less to do with its thematic statements on art than with its narrative structure, which is considerably more complex than that of the three preceding tales. It is the only one of the four stories that is not narrated primarily as a first-person monologue or confession on the part of the artist himself; even "The Improvvisatore" is revealed to have been more or less a transcription of the story related to the frame narrator by Cypriano. Abandoning the first-person monologue, "Sebastian Bach" is thus forced to confront directly the problem of representing subjectivities in narrative fiction, a problem that the story addresses explicitly in its meditation on the difficulties of narrating Sebastian's inner life and the role that the character of Albrecht plays in that artistic task. "Sebastian Bach" is also the story that most fully enfolds the cycle's philosophical tensions into its own narrative structure, rather than

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освободившийся от пут средневекового ремесла; он довел до совершенства эпический принцип религиозного искусства, но остановился в преддверии новой музыки].

relying on a dialogue *about* the story in the frame narrative ("Sebastian Bach" makes up the entirety of the Eighth Night, with no preceding or following philosophical discourse). If "Beethoven's Last Quartet" begins to intertwine the principles of musical composition and narrative discourse, such that the patterns of Beethoven's late music, including its striking dissonance, inform the story's own structure, then "Sebastian Bach" commits fully to this model. Harmony is the predominant principle throughout the bulk of the story, both thematically and structurally. A discordant note intrudes in the tale's final section, introducing conflict and tension simultaneously on the levels of plot, narrative, and philosophical-aesthetic discourse.

III. Conclusion

All four of the artists' stories in *Russian Nights* stage the problem of inspiration, inspiration here understood as the force that mediates between thought, *mysl'*, and expression, *vyrazhenie*. As we have seen, each story considers this fundamental duality of thought vs. expression as it is informed by three other central binaries: inwardly vs. outwardly derived creation, or a focus on inner vision vs. art that is externally motivated; transhistoricism vs. teleological periodization as an approach to categorizing new artforms; and madness vs. creative genius. "Opere del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi" and "The Improvvisatore" pose these dualisms as a philosophical problem; "Beethoven's Last Quartet" and "Sebastian Bach," invoking Romantic discourse about music, reproduce this problem on the level of literary form, where it motivates experimental variations on the *Künstlerroman* genre.

The Bach story comes closest to achieving an image of resolution in its representation of the "mysteries of harmony," which at first promise a synthesis of the individual's own extrarational subjective experience with the material reality of the outside world. Returning to the excerpt from Albrecht's monologue with which this chapter began, harmonious music—pure, absolute music that is modeled upon the divine patterns immanent in God's creation—transcends the fundamental duality of thought and expression that is born when infant mankind's cradle is shaken. Harmony is the fragment's opposite; it is the overcoming of fragmentation. And yet in "Sebastian Bach" even this vision of perfect harmony gives way to ambivalence. Odoevskii falls deliberately short of the image of ideal synthesis that Hoffman creates in "Rath Krespel," and Francesco and the adultery plot introduce a discordant note on both the thematic and structural levels of Odoevskii's story.

Significantly, it is not only within "Sebastian Bach" itself that the principle of harmony is undermined. The story's valence, which is primarily optimistic about the redemptive potentiality of art, changes when we read it alongside the three other artists' stories in the context of *Russian Nights* as a whole. Cypriano's reliance on an external (demonic) force to overcome the abyss between thought and expression and the resulting automation, even mechanization, of his art, cast a shadow upon Bach's similar adherence to an external (divine) force and the resulting apathy and alienation he experiences. Moreover, the specter of modernity that appears in the Piranesi story haunts the Bach story as well: no matter how harmonious Bach's compositions are, they strike the listener as outmoded next to Francesco's new style of singing. And the heroic quality of Beethoven's commitment to his own unique artistic vision calls Bach's total surrender of selfhood to the creative process into question.

All four stories speak to each other in this way. What is established as provisionally "true" about the creative process in one story is countered by the vision of artistic inspiration given in another. It is only by considering all four stories together along with the philosophical

dialogue in the frame narrative that the pattern of central binaries emerges and the individual texts' reliance on dualistic thinking becomes obvious. The tensions between these binaries within the frame and embedded texts also reflect outward onto *Russian Nights* as a whole. The conflict between transhistoricist and teleological temporalities in the artists' stories, for example, stage a problem that is fundamental to the conceit of *Russian Nights* itself, which brings various historical artists into a transhistorical dialogue, thereby flattening history while also remaining preoccupied with such periodizing categories as lateness and modernity.

By layering these different historical portraits, by expressing "one and the same thought" from different points of view, Odoevskii inhabits these early Romantic dualisms while also critically diagnosing dualistic thinking as a philosophical and artistic liability. Each individual story, written in the 1830s, expresses the Romantic dualism of the 20s; taken together and read through the distancing narrative frame of the philosophical dialogue of the 40s, they constitute an experimental cycle that navigates Romantic dualities without trying to resolve or overcome them. This cycle gestures toward a new aesthetic form which is no longer troubled by the disjunction between thought and expression.

Ultimately, musical composition emerges as a model for this new narrative form. The polyphonic nature of *Russian Nights* reflects the principle of variations on a theme expressed contrapuntally. "Sebastian Bach" reveals that even music, held by Romantic aesthetics to be the most transcendent of the sister arts, is unable to provide a lasting synthesis of the subjective and the objective. Moreover, while the Bach story opens with conservative nostalgia for the harmonies—artistic, religious, and domestic—of a bygone (premodern) era, the lifelessness of Sebastian's harmonious creations when contrasted with the discordant passion of Beethoven's late quartets undermines the story's faith in the early Romantic dream of ideal synthesis achieved through music. Moving beyond the search for synthesis which preoccupied the thinkers of the 1820s, *Russian Nights* takes musical structures as a model for a new, experimental literary form capable of comfortably inhabiting dualities without attempting to resolve them.

CHAPTER TWO

Word, Text, and Image: The Sister Arts in Gogol

I. Introduction

Reflecting on *Dead Souls* [*Mertvye dushi*] from the confines of a Soviet labor camp, Andrei Siniavskii writes in *In Gogol's Shadow* [*V teni Gogolia*] that Gogol's novel is largely a text about its own creation: "His *poema* is written primarily about the process of its being written" [Его поэма в значительной части своей написана о том, как она пишется].[96] That *Dead Souls* is a novel preoccupied with its own composition is a nearly irrefutable fact of Gogol scholarship. The authorial commentary interspersed throughout the narrative in the form of the famous lyrical digressions; the ways in which the eponymous "dead souls" gradually acquire significance and thus a sort of ghostly existence over the course of the novel in a parody of the act of creation; the two agreeable ladies whose bewildered reaction to the mystery of the "dead souls" in Chapter Nine can be taken as an allegory of reader response; the verbal excesses of Nozdryov and the postmaster, who identifies Chichikov as none other than the war veteran and amputee Captain Kopeikin, and whose referent-less linguistic artistry offers a key to Gogol's own literary technique—all of these moments suggest that the primary "content," the thought or idea [*mysl'*], behind the expressive form [*vyrazhenie*] of the novel is nothing more or less than the act of literary creation itself.[97]

Indeed, the same can be said of most, if not all, of the texts in Gogol's *oeuvre*. As Donald Fanger observes, "The bedrock allegory of Gogol's art […] concerns the miracle and meaning of its own existence."[98] Fanger's monograph provides an extended reading of the Gogolian text as preeminently self-referential, a tendency that Fanger attributes primarily to the historical moment in which Gogol was writing:

> At this point one needs to recall the literary situation Gogol entered—all those laments about the absence of an original prose art that might constitute a national voice. What they posed was the question of the possibility of literature—and that, in a sense going beyond the historical, is the question to which Gogol's sustained and increasingly serious improvisations represent an answer […] Gogol's genius was to devise an answer by writing about the question.[99]

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[96] Andrei Siniavskii, *V teni Gogolia* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange in association with Collins, 1975), p. 261. Translation mine.

[97] For examples of Gogol scholarship that read Gogol's texts as primarily concerned with the process and/or shape of their own composition, see Charles C. Bernheimer, "Cloaking the Self: The Literary Space of Gogol's 'Overcoat,'" *PMLA*, Vol. 90, No. 1 (1975), pp. 53-61; John Lutz, "Chichikov's Chest: Reality, Representation, and Infectious Storytelling in *Dead Souls*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Winter 2001), pp. 365-388; Christopher Putney, "Gogol's Modeling of Reception Aesthetic in Dead Souls and The Inspector General: Affinities with E.T.A. Hoffmann and Wolfgang Iser." *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 30-46; Gary Saul Morson, "Gogol's Parables of Explanation: Nonsense and Prosaics," *Essays on Gogol: Logos and the Russian Word*, ed. Susanne Fusso and Priscilla Meyer (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1992), pp. 200-239; and Renate Lachmann, "The Semantic Construction of the Void," *Gogol: Exploring Absence: Negativity in 19th Century Russian Literature*, ed. Sven Spieker (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 1999), pp. 17-33.

[98] Donald Fanger, *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge & London: Harvard UP, 1979), p. 261.

[99] ibid., pp. 259-260

According to Fanger, Gogol is responding throughout his career to a historical absence: the lack of a Russian literary tradition—especially of a Russian *prose* tradition—that was widely recognized as a national problem in his literary milieu. Gogol's response to this *historical* absence is to represent it "in a sense going beyond the historical"—to reimagine it as a *metaphysical* absence, as the fundamental disconnect between the potential forms of literary art and the forms of material reality. The Gogolian universe appears as "a void to mirror an emptiness, [giving] that emptiness dimensionality and virtuality."[100] Gogol's world, his characters, make no claims to any existence beyond a purely textual one: what they embody—in the emphasis that is placed, through parody, allegory, and romantic irony, on the fact of their constructedness—is "the large, life-enhancing potencies of literature."[101] The "great idea" that informs Gogol's mature (post-*Dikanka*) writing is thus the power of literary creation itself.

Fanger's approach, which represents a prevailing trend in 20th-century Gogol scholarship, delights in the open-endedness of Gogol's "representation of absence": untethered from extraliterary referents, Gogol's verbal creations are endlessly self-generative, thereby reflecting the life-giving potentialities of art.[102] Gogol himself, of course, came to see this open-endedness as a moral and aesthetic failure. The unfinished second and third volumes of *Dead Souls* were intended to offer a positive counterweight to the emptiness revealed in Volume One; an emptiness not only of extraliterary referent (which could be construed as artistically liberating), but an emptiness that was also, for Gogol, metaphysical: his art registered only spiritual lack, never spiritual presence. Ultimately unable to provide this positive counterweight, and eschewing his earlier works, Gogol produced the astonishing *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* [*Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druz'iami*] at the end of 1846. This text has traditionally been taken as evidence that Gogol's desire to depict a positive social, religious, or spiritual reality as a presence, rather than through the comical representation of its absence, is mutually exclusive to his art. When Gogol abandons the stance of negation, of the famous *ne to* ["not that"]—when he tries to use verbal creation to represent something other than the very nothingness that verbal creation populates—Gogol-the-artist loses his artistry and becomes Gogol-the-prophet.

The question that I propose to take up in this chapter echoes the one with which Gogol himself was preoccupied throughout his life, and which presented itself with particular urgency in the period stretching from the composition of *Arabesques* [*Arabeski*] (c.a. 1831-1835) to his death in 1852. The question is this: Once absence has been established, once all the extensive resources of Gogol's comic art have been mobilized to uncover a fundamental lack—both the lack of spiritual meaning that threatens human existence and is the basic characteristic of all Gogol's heroes; and, in a complex parallel, the lack of a mimetic referent that is the basis for all

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[100] ibid., p. 262

[101] ibid., p. 262

[102] In his introduction to the 1999 collection of criticism *Gogol: Exploring Absence: Negativity in 19th-Century Russian Literature*, Sven Spieker asserts that absence, in one form or another, was the primary preoccupation and guiding motif of Gogol's life and work. This absence, Spieker argues, is never recuperated: "Gogol's energetic rhetoric of absence does not help in locating the missing object. Gogolian writing is directed at absence, but it does not recuperate or fill its void," p. 5. The essays featured in the collection link Gogol's representations of absence variously with the demonic (see also Dmitrii Chizhevskii, "O 'Shineli' Gogolia," *Sovremennye zapiski* [Paris], 67 [1938], pp. 173-174, 178-184), the sublime, the comedic (see also Gary Saul Morson, "Gogol's Parables of Explanation: Logos and the Russian Word" and Cathy Popkin, "Distended Discourse: Gogol, Jean Paul, and the Poetics of Elaboration," *Essays on Gogol: Logos and the Russian Word*, ed. Susanne Fusso and Priscilla Meyer [Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1992]), and with negative theology.

verbal art—once this lack has been uncovered, where does one go from there? Long before he consigned Volume Two of *Dead Souls* to the flames, Gogol was driven by an anxious desire to find expression for what he saw as the inexpressible; to locate, and represent, the positive presence, the *to* of the negating *ne to* formulation.

This chapter will examine three of Gogol's works—"The Portrait" [Portret] (1835), the fragment "Rome" [Rim] (1842), and *Dead Souls*, Volumes One and Two—for traces of that unrealizable *to*, the positive presence whose contours are occasionally glimpsed where they border the dark spaces of Gogol's fundamentally empty universe. The accepted paradox of Gogol's art is that the positive ideal, *mysl'* as presence, is eternally absent in the sense of being unrepresented, whereas the negation of that ideal is made present through literary representation. The Gogolian paradox has its basis in the dualities of Romantic idealism, including the thought/form (*mysl'/vyrazhenie*) binary which is so important for Odoevskii's *Russian Nights* (see Chapter One). The privileged genre of philosophical idealism is the fragment, which is understood to stand in for the absent ideal work and thus to embody Romanticism's eternally frustrated longing for completion. Gogol inherits Romanticism's negative theology, according to which the contours of being are revealed only by tracing the outlines of nonbeing; its anxiety over the tension between idea and expression; and its doubt about the possibility of meaningful positive representation. And yet for Gogol the fragment remains an insufficient solution to the fundamental problem of Romantic form.

This chapter sets out to show how traces of the ideal, the elusive *to*, are present in many of Gogol's works; not as fragments, but through the inclusion of metaforms in the guise of physical (spatial and/or visualizable) objects that give metafictional expression to the idealized form toward which the text itself aspires. For Gogol, as we shall see below, the metaform functions in ways that recall both the Baroque emblem and the Eastern Orthodox icon. Gogol seeks an alternative to the modern Romantic genre of the fragment in older models of symbolic thinking, turning to Renaissance, Baroque, and Byzantine painterly genres to resolve the crisis posed by Romanticism's negative theology.[103]

To offer a familiar example from Gogol's *oeuvre*, Plyushkin's garden in Chapter Six of *Dead Souls* can be thought of as a fully present metaliterary emblem. Readers of *Dead Souls* from Pyotr Pletnyov, in his review of the novel in 1842, to Vladimir Nabokov and, more recently, Susanne Fusso, have read this garden as the crowning artistic moment and the spiritual heart of *Dead Souls*, if not the very key to its interpretation.[104] Plyushkin's garden is one of those rare objects with true form in Gogol's writing; it is present, verbally *and* palpably. We can visualize precisely what it looks like. If the gossipmongers and the inveterate liars, the agreeable ladies, the Nozdryovs and Khlestakovs of Gogol's artistic universe offer a metaliterary reflection

[103] It is important to acknowledge that the emblem has been identified as a precursor to the Romantic fragment, especially in its articulation in Denis Diderot's "Lettre sur les sourds et muets" (1751) and his article on the emblem in the *Encyclopédie*, where he defines emblems as representing "'in a moment, and by a simple and distinct notion, what our [writers] can represent only successively, and by a long sequence of expressions and machines'" (qtd. in Greenleaf, *Pushkin and Romantic Fashion: Fragment, Elegy, Orient, Irony*, p. 27). The emblem (in Diderot's conception) and the fragment share their brevity of form and a skeptical attitude toward language. However, the fragment surpasses the more limited skepticism and irony of the Baroque emblem and introduces the new element of dialogic thinking.

[104] Pletnyov writes of Plyushkin's garden that Gogol had "'with astonishing clarity set forth in these few words his whole esthetic theory…*His whole book is like this garden*'" (qtd. in Fanger, p. 175). More recently, Susanne Fusso has described Plyushkin's garden as "the apotheosis of the picturesque and the aesthetic heart of *Dead Souls*." See Fusso, "The Landscape of *Arabesques*," *Essays on Gogol: Logos and the Russian Word* (Northwestern UP, 1992), p. 123.

of Gogol's creative process, then Plyushkin's garden provides a rare metaliterary reflection of Gogol's creative process *as he wanted it to be,* and as he hoped it would become in the future.

The distinction, of course, is that the gossipers and liars of Gogol's world deal in words, mimicking Gogol's own excessive verbosity (though without his artistic intent); whereas Plyushkin's garden is a physical object (or at least has a clear physical object as its referent). Moreover, that object has aesthetic value: "In short, it was all just right, as neither nature nor art can contrive, but as only occurs when they join together, when, after the heaped-up, often senseless, labors of men, nature makes a finishing pass with her chisel…"[105] [Словом, все было хорошо, как не выдумать ни природе, ни искусству, но как бывает только тогда, когда они соединятся вместе, когда по нагроможденному, часто без толку, труду человека пройдет окончательным резцом своим природа…].[106] Indeed, the object, or form, that Gogol had in mind when describing Plyushkin's garden may have been closer to a work of visual art than an actual garden. Fusso suggests that the garden is a literary version of a picturesque landscape painting.[107] She connects Plyushkin's garden to a comment that Gogol once made to Pavel Annenkov about his desire to paint a certain type of landscape:

> If I were a painter, I would choose a special sort of landscape. What trees and landscapes they paint today! Everything is clear and sorted out; the master has read through it, and the spectator follows him haltingly. I would enchain tree with tree, entangle the branches, let light show through where no one expects it, that is the kind of landscape one should paint![108]

Gogol was an amateur artist who studied painting at the St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts throughout the 1830s until his departure abroad in 1836, and who continued to produce a number of sketches and watercolors while living in Rome.[109] There is a good possibility that the image of Plyushkin's garden began, in Gogol's mind, as an object for a landscape *painting*, rather than as an object of verbal representation, especially if we take the garden as the "heart" of Gogol's novel, the metaliterary emblem of the composition Gogol hoped to achieve in *Dead Souls* itself.

It is precisely at this intersection of Gogol's literary art with the visual arts—especially painting, for which Gogol had a lifelong affinity—that I propose to seek additional metafictional emblems, or metaforms: represented aesthetic objects (paintings, and sometimes sculptures) that attain the form that Gogol sought for his own *verbal* art, and which give a sense of the positive ideal, the *to,* toward which he was striving. As we shall see, for Gogol the visual is more concrete, more "real" than the verbal. According to Gogol's idiosyncratic aesthetic understanding—informed by a dilettante interest in Romantic aesthetic philosophy, combined with iconographic tendencies taken from Eastern Orthodoxy—visual art is more successful at representing presence than is verbal art, *especially* verbal narrative.

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[105] Translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, *Dead Souls* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1996), p. 113. Subsequent citations to this translation of *Dead Souls* will appear parenthetically in the text by page number.
[106] Nikolai Gogol, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v chetyrnadtsati tomakh* (Moscow and Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1937-1952), Vol. 6, p. 113. Subsequent citations to Gogol's *PSS* will appear parenthetically in the text by volume and page number.
[107] Susanne Fusso, *Designing Dead Souls: An Anatomy of Disorder in Gogol* (Stanford UP: 1993).
[108] From Annenkov's memoirs; qtd. and trans. in ibid., p. 132.
[109] For a helpful overview of Gogol's forays into the world of painting, see A.A. Nazarevskii, "Gogol' i iskusstvo,' *Pamiati Gogolia. Sbornik rechei i statei* (Kiev, 1911), pp. 49-90; and N.G. Mashkovtsev, *Gogol' v krugu khudozhnikov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1955).

Explicit evidence of Gogol's preference for the image over the text is found in his two major essays on painting, the first of which, "The Last Day of Pompeii" [Poslednii den' Pompeii] (1834) warrants a brief discussion here.[110] In this essay, Gogol presents Karl Briullov's massive painting *The Last Day of Pompeii* as an ideal artwork, claiming that it manifests Briullov's ability to capture every minute detail of life and then elevate those details into a harmonious totality. Gogol's critical vocabulary is important here: he speaks of the perfect correspondence between thought and expression, *mysl'* and *vyrazhenie*, in Briullov's painting, arguing that one of its primary virtues is the absence of "abstract idealism": "If idealism had been incorporated into it this would have meant a preponderance of *thought*, its *expression* would have been entirely different, and it would have produced the wrong *impression*"[111] [Явись идеальность, явись перевес *мысли*, и она бы имела совершенно другое *выражение*, она бы не произвела того *впечатления*] (8:112) (emphases mine). The perfect artwork, then, requires that a beautiful thought, which is already whole in itself and precedes its articulation in signs, be given expression; that expression is characterized by the subordination of every element to a single elevating idea; that expression must then produce an *impression*, *vpechatlenie*, on the viewer, moving him in a way that for Gogol is almost physical.

Significantly, this totalizing impression bears a close resemblance to the spiritual sublime. While Gogol does not use the word "sublime" [*vozvyshennoe*] in his essay, his description of the effect that Briullov's painting has on the viewer echoes the Kantian notion of the sublime as that which grants us awareness of our immortal soul, which is superior to and incorruptible by any earthly power:

> It is not destruction and death that we fear; on the contrary, at that moment there is a certain poetic, spiritual enjoyment which sings up like a whirlwind; we pity the sensuality which we hold so dear, and we pity our beautiful earth. He captured the full force of this idea. (208)
>
> Нам не разрушение, не смерть страшны; напротив, в этой минуте есть что-то поэтическое, стремящее вихрем душевное наслаждение; нам жалка наша милая чувственность, нам жалка прекрасная земля наша. Он постигнул во всей силе эту мысль. (8:112)

The effect of this sublimity, which relies on the all-encompassing presence of the *totality* of Briullov's painting, is entirely opposed to the nature of the fragment, a post-Kantian genre. Furthermore, the painting's visual nature allows the entire truth of its content (a truth that Gogol characterizes, in somewhat vague terms, as the confrontation between physical beauty and the inevitability of death) to be communicated instantaneously to the viewer:

> Moreover, one may say that effects are used to the greatest advantage in painting and in everything in general which we see with our eyes. There, if they are spurious and inappropriate, their spuriousness and inappropriateness is

[110] The second is "The Historical Painter Ivanov" [Istoricheskii zhivopisets Ivanov] (1846), included in *Selected Passages*; an evolution in Gogol's thought regarding painting, emblematic of a shift in his attitude toward art more generally, is evident between the two essays, and will be examined in greater detail below.

[111] Translation by Alexander Tulloch, *Arabesques* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1982), p. 208. Subsequent citations to this translation of *Arabesques* will appear parenthetically in the text by page number.

> immediately evident to all. But in those works which are susceptible to the mind's eye, it's quite a different matter. There, if they are false, they are harmful in that they spread falsehood because the simple-minded crowd hurls itself indiscriminately at anything that glitters. (204)
>
> Впрочем, можно сказать, что эффекты более всего выгодны в живописи и вообще во всем том, что видим нашими глазами. Там, если они будут ложны и неуместны, то их ложность и неуместность тотчас видна всякому. Но в произведениях, подверженных духовному оку, совершенно другое дело. Там они, если ложны, то вредны тем, что распространяют ложь, потому что простодушная толпа без рассуждения кидается на блестящее. (8:108-109)

The asserted opposition between painting and literary art (i.e. "those works which are susceptible to the mind's eye") in this passage is striking: words are indeterminate, and thus dangerous, whereas images cannot deceive. The content of an image is *immediately* [*totchas*] visible to those who behold it. As such, painting is able to express ""that poetry [!] and those distinguishing features which our feelings know and see but never express in words" (109) [Кисть его вмещает в себе ту поэзию, которую чувства наши всегда знают и видят даже отличительные признаки, но слова их никогда не расскажут] (8:112-113). Here is the Gogolian theme of the inexpressible, the unrealizable—but that unrealizability applies only to verbal art. Painting is another matter.

In what follows, I will focus primarily on what I am referring to as Gogol's "sister arts" stories—those texts that feature or deal explicitly with the visual and plastic arts as a metaliterary stand-in for Gogol's thinking about his own literary art: "The Portrait" (the 1835 *Arabesques* version) and "Rome." I will apply my conclusions to a reading of several of Gogol's "failed" (i.e., formally or artistically imperfect), unfinished, and/or unwritten works (*Arabesques*, as well as two unwritten collections for which the story "The Portrait"—ultimately included in *Arabesques* in 1835, and then revised for a compendium of Petersburg tales in 1842—may have been originally intended; the novel *Annunziata*, of which "Rome" is presented as a fragment; and—briefly—Volume Two of *Dead Souls*) as they refer to, engage with, diverge from, and/or fall short of aesthetic or formal ideals referenced both in Gogol's essays and letters on painting, and in the sister arts stories.[112]

[112] It is perhaps surprising that the problem of Gogol and the sister arts has not received more scholarly attention. As mentioned above, Gogol was himself an amateur artist who maintained a keen interest in painting, as well as a theoretical interest in sculpture, architecture, and music throughout his life. Like Pushkin and Lermontov, Gogol made sketches in his notebooks and drafts; unlike his contemporaries, he successfully designed and published the official cover for one of his own works, *Dead Souls*. He also maintained close friendships with painters, especially in Rome, and wrote essays and articles on painting, architecture, sculpture, and music. In terms of the critical work that has already been done in connection with Gogol and the arts, 20th-century Russian and Soviet scholarship saw several accounts of Gogol's biographical interest in painting and his contact with artists in Petersburg and Rome (Nazarevskii, Mashkovtsev). One of the most well-known and systematic considerations of the influence that Gogol's painterly sensibilities had on his literary texts is Andrei Belyi's *Gogol's Artistry* [*Masterstvo Gogolia*] (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1934). Monographs on Gogol tend to include a short section devoted to Gogol's interest in the visual arts. In the third chapter ("Esthetics") of his 1924 study *Gogol'*, V.V. Gippius provides an overview of the ways in which Gogol's thinking about the various artforms was influenced by German Romanticism and its reception in Russia in the 1820s and 30s; we will return to this question below. In *Exploring Gogol* (Stanford UP, 1994), Robert Maguire notes that Gogol "had always been a writer who thought in visual terms" (p. 97), and in a subsection titled "Poet as Painter," Maguire observes that "there is no doubt that throughout

II. "The Portrait," *Arabesques*, and the Gogolian *Künstlerroman*

The history of the composition and publication of "The Portrait" is characteristic, even emblematic of Gogol's approach to literary creation, which tended to involve numerous, distinctly different drafts and revisions over a period of many years.[113] Gogol struggled to finalize "The Portrait" in a form that he could be satisfied with, and to identify the right frame for its publication. The story may have been intended for the unrealized multi-author almanac *Triad* [*Troichatka*] as well as for one of Gogol's own unwritten collections—*Moonlight in the broken window of an attic on Vasilievskii Island* [*Lunnyi svet v razbitom okoshke cherdaka na Vasil'evskom ostrove*])—before finally being published in *Arabesques* in 1835 and then, in an extensively revised form, in the *Collected Works* of 1842. This struggle to finalize "The Portrait" attests to Gogol's constant anxiety over realizing the right artistic expression for his vision.

It is no surprise that "The Portrait," as a traditional Romantic *Künstlerroman* and, alongside "Rome," the fictional text from Gogol's *oeuvre* that is most explicitly concerned with the visual and plastic arts, is deeply self-referential. It will be the task of this section to analyze the specific ways in which Gogol uses references to, and techniques and models from, the visual arts in "The Portrait" to engage in an examination of the competing abilities of painting and narrative to convey extra-artistic presence through art; in other words, to transfer the presence of life into signs. Ultimately, Gogol seeks to limit the interpretive possibilities open to the reader by turning painting into a series of metafictional emblems that reveal the finished form he desired for "The Portrait" itself. I will argue that Gogol seeks to impose on his own literary text what he saw as the plastic and visual arts' most unique feature: their ability to signify, transparently and *instantaneously*, the entire meaning and spiritual content behind their external form, a result of their position, in Gogol's eyes, as objects of fixed space rather than of open-ended time.

It is worth noting from the outset that Gogol's valorization of the painted image as an example of consummate artistic creation, which we have already observed in his essay on Briullov, is unusual within the wider context of Romantic aesthetics. European Romanticism is typically understood as a period during which the classical imperative *ut pictura poesis* was replaced by a new analogy that privileged music as poetry's ideal double. The graphic image is associated in Romantic thought with an empiricist model of representation that mimics but does not transform reality—hence its great appeal as an analogy for literature throughout the neoclassical period.[114] In the discourse of Romantic criticism, with its predilection for dualisms and oppositions, word and image come to stand in for a host of other dichotomies that suggest

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his life, painting consistently stood for literature" (p. 99). Maguire intriguingly suggests that this attraction to the visual may have been rooted in Gogol's Orthodoxy, specifically his faith in the power of icons; however, the suggestion is left unelaborated. One of the more recent systematic considerations of Gogol's abiding concern with the visual arts is Gavriel Shapiro's *Nikolai Gogol and the Baroque Cultural Heritage* (Pennsylvania State UP, 1993), which considers the ways in which Baroque forms, including two visual art forms, the *lubok* and the emblem, influenced Gogol's literary practice. Of particular interest for this study is Shapiro's identification of the references to *lubok* in "The Portrait," and his discussion of Gogol's literary adaptation of the visual effect of chiaroscuro.

[113] With a few notable exceptions; *The Inspector General* [*Revizor*] was written in a matter of weeks.

[114] W.J.T. Mitchell notes that the "antipictorialist position" was dominant in European Romantic poetics, pointing out that "images, pictures, and visual perception were highly problematic issues for many romantic writers […] We may even go on to note that pictures and vision frequently play a negative role in romantic poetic theory." See Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago and London: U of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 114.

fundamentally conflicting modes of representation: the image is an empiricist, bodily, and mimetic sign, while the word manifests spiritual, sublime, ideal signification.

The central opposition that is taken to define the vital difference between verbal and visual representation is the space/time divide that finds its classic formulation in Lessing's *Laokoon* (1766). According to Lessing, painting is spatial and static, poetry is temporal: painting can signify elements of reality, but not spiritual meaning, which necessarily has a temporal or narrative component; the objects of painting are bodies, while poetry describes actions and ideas. For Lessing, and for many Romantic theorists after him, this division levels a moral imperative at poetry, or verbal expression more generally, not to strive after immediacy and spatiality—that is, not to aspire to the status of the image or the graphic icon—but to embrace the higher possibilities of voiced, temporal form. W.J.T. Mitchell refers to this imperative as "romantic iconophobia": when the image, in its pure materiality and plastic presence, is viewed as potentially idolatrous.[115]

Arabesques at times echoes this antipictorialist argument in its theoretical statements about aesthetics, particularly in those essays that engage in the Romantic trope of laying out the historical development of the artforms. The collection's opening essay, "Sculpture, Painting, and Music" [Skul'ptura, zhivopis' i muzyka], is premised on concepts taken from Russian encounters with German aesthetics in the early to mid-1820s.[116] While early Russian essays on Romantic aesthetics vary to some extent in their specific position on painting, all construct a narrative of historical progress that moves from the plastic forms of antiquity to the ideal art of the Christian era, which is most often associated with music. Vladimir Odoevskii, for example, writes in "An Essay in the Theory of the Fine Arts" [Opyt teorii iziashchnykh iskusstv] that painting affects its audience in a way that is immediate, material, and relatively superficial, while music penetrates into the interior of our souls, an idea taken directly from German aesthetics.[117] While the Russian Romantic theorists at times modify or adapt the ideas of their German predecessors, a similar fear of or contempt for the graphic image pervades their writings. In "Sculpture, Painting, and Music," Gogol follows the traditional schema by positioning painting as a midway point between the pure sensuality of pagan sculpture and the pure Christianity of music, this last being the only truly "disembodied" or spiritual artform. Gogol makes the usual distinction between painting, which—though it is higher than pagan sculpture—nevertheless depends upon material form to embody divine inspiration; and music, which inspires in the Christian soul the sublime desire to

[115] ibid., pp. 114-120

[116] See especially Vladimir Odoevskii, "Opyt teorii iziashchnykh iskusstv" (1823-1825), Alexander Galich's 1825 article, "Opyt nauki iziashchnogo," and Dmitri Venevitinov's "Razbor stat'i o Evgenii Onegine" (1825) and "Skul'ptura, zhivopis' i muzyka" (1827). As Yuri Mann notes, this last essay by Venevitinov is one of the first in the Russian genre of the "hymn to the muses" [гимн музам], a genre to which Gogol's identically titled essay in *Arabesques* also belongs. See Mann, *Russkaia filosofskaia estetika*, p. 26.

[117] The idea that music is the most perfect of the artforms is especially prevalent in the aesthetic theory of Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, whose *Outpourings of an Art-Loving Monk* [*Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden klosterbruders*] (1797) was translated into Russian by the Moscow Romantics (Venevitinov, Odoevskii, Shevyrev, Titov) in 1826. Gippius argues that "The Russian Romantics of the 1820s who were grouped around *The Moscow Herald* […] were closer to Wackenroder's version of Romanticism than to Schelling's […] In architecture, as in music, they saw pure idea, unconditioned by any proximity to nature." See Gippius, *Gogol'*, pp. 42-45. Galich, a devoted follower of Schelling and one of the first to bring Schelling's philosophy to Russia, was an exception; like Schelling, Galich desired a unification of the infinite (spirituality) and the finite (plasticity).

"tear itself free of the body" (8) [как бы душою овладело только одно желание вырваться из тела] (8:12).[118]

And yet, with the exception of a short essay on Ukrainian folk songs, Gogol does not return to music in *Arabesques*. In practice, painting and the visual icon continue to dominate as Gogol's preferred emblem for ideal aesthetic creation. Gippius uses draft evidence to indicate that even in "Sculpture, Painting and Music," "In speaking about painting, [Gogol] betrays some hesitation"; and in later essays, most notably "The Last Day of Pompei," "Gogol speaks of painting apart from his preconceived scheme; indeed, he contradicts that scheme."[119] As I hope to illustrate below, Gogol accepts the traditional Romantic dichotomy of word and image, associating the word with temporality and narrativity, and the image with static space; and yet, perhaps influenced by the status of the image in Eastern Orthodox iconography[120], in both "The Last Day of Pompei" and "The Portrait," Gogol reverses the value judgment on these two categories, valorizing the painted image as an emblem of ideal aesthetic form. In doing so, Gogol privileges a certain notion of *presence* or plenitude that is effected by materialization in space, and which directly opposes the usual Romantic inclination toward absence and fragmentation, so closely bound up with Romantic conceptions of poetry and music.

"The Portrait" is *Arabesques*' most systematic *fictional* consideration of painting as an emblem for ideal form and of what it would mean to access the affordances of painting in written language. As such, the story can be productively read alongside "The Last Day of Pompeii" as emblematic of Gogol's positive conception of visual art in 1835. "The Portrait" is the least anthologized of the three Petersburg stories that appear in *Arabesques* (the other two are "Notes of a Madman" [Zapiski sumasshedshego] and "Nevsky Prospekt"); yet it is also, in some ways, the most representative, as it is the purest instantiation of the Romantic genre that informs all three texts – that of the *Künstlerroman* ("Notes of a Madman" was originally titled "Notes of a Mad Musician" [Zapiski sumasshedshego muzykanta]). In "The Portrait," the tentative *ut pictura poesis* analogy to which Gogol returns throughout *Arabesques* is at its most concentrated. The story represents a sustained attempt to think through the ways in which visual and verbal artworks are characterized by differing relationships between art (representation) and life; as well as the problems that inhere in attempting to convey the full presence of life in art, of transferring life into signs. Through a close reading of one of the story's key scenes—the temptation of the painter Chertkov by the portrait-come-to-life, the moneylender Petromikhali—I hope to show that Gogol's acceptance of the spatiality/temporality divide between painting and poetry, combined with his personal admiration for painting and faith in the power of images, produces an opposite impulse to that of Mitchell's "romantic iconophobia": instead, a fear of narrative,

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[118] Interestingly, Gippius references "an article by Feti [in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 1830] on the *physical* effects of music. An intermediate position was taken by a contributor to *The Literary Gazette*, Trilunny-Struisky, who saw in art not harmony but a *struggle* between the finite and the infinite, and who drew analogies between esthetic feelings and physical sensations." See Gippius, *Gogol'*, p. 189.

[119] ibid., p. 43.

[120] Most pre-Romantic and Romantic anti-pictorialists were writing within a Protestant context. Lessing's iconoclastic discourse is undoubtedly a product of German Enlightenment thinking; in Chapter 9 of the *Laokoon* he states that, among ancient works, "None […] which betray too obvious traces of religious conventions, deserves [to be called a work of art] because in their case the artist did not create for art's sake, but his art was merely a handmaid of religion, which stressed meaning more than beauty […]." See G.E. Lessing, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1962), pp. 55-56. Lessing's claim, echoed by the Idealist philosophers and aestheticians who followed him, that painting in its plasticity and immobility was unfit for the symbolic signification necessary to religious art, would seem strange to an Orthodox writer like Gogol.

which, because it relies both on the inherent absence of the referent and on placement in time, is shown to be contingent and potentially deceptive.[121]

"The Portrait" is a fantastic *Künstlerroman* whose hero, Chertkov, is led astray by a picture that comes to life. This picture depicts an infamous Petersburg moneylender named Petromikhali, who we later learn is a manifestation of the Antichrist. The temptation scene—the moment in the story when Petromikhali emerges from his portrait to tempt Chertkov to abandon his modest labors as a poor artist and accept a sachet of gold that will enable him to turn to fashionable portraiture for easy money—reveals the story's tension between stable imagery on the one hand, and threatening narrativity on the other.

From the beginning, there is something sinister about the portrait's extraordinary lifelikeness. When Chertkov first acquires the painting at the secondhand art dealer's shop in Shchukin Place, he is struck by the moneylender's eyes, which give the uncanny impression of being alive:

> Taking a bank-note out of his pocket, he threw it in the dealer's face and eagerly went to seize the picture; but suddenly he jumped back from it, struck by fear. The dark eyes of the depicted old man stared at him in such a life-like, yet at the same time deathly, manner that he could not help being frightened. It seemed as though by some inexplicable power a part of life had been retained by them. Those eyes had not been drawn; they were alive, they were human eyes. They were motionless, but to be sure they could not have been more terrifying if they had moved. (60)
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> Вынувши из кармана ассигнацию, он бросил ее в лицо купцу и ухватился с жадностью за картину, но вдруг отскочил от нее, пораженный страхом. Темные глаза нарисованного старика глядели так живо и вместе мертвенно, что нельзя было не ощутить испуга. Казалось, в них неизъяснимо странною силою удержана была часть жизни. Это были не нарисованные, это были живые, это были человеческие глаза. Они были неподвижны, но, верно, не были бы так ужасны, если бы двигались. (3:405)

The claim that the moneylender's eyes "had not been drawn," that they were "alive," recalls the visual image's unique capacity for reproducing presence. The painting is an exact reflection of the reality it represents, and this verisimilitude of representation is the special province of the visual, of that plasticity and iconicity which are inaccessible to narrative art.[122] In Gogol's story, this "lifelike" quality of painting is literalized: as we later learn, a part of the Antichrist's lifeforce has indeed been preserved within the portrait through supernatural means.

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[121] Gogol tends to equate narrativity with the ontologically fallen state of language as a whole. He is persistently suspicious of fictional narrative (his own chosen artform), a suspicion which does not generally extend to other verbal forms (essayistic genres, philosophical discourse, etc.). In Gogol's texts narrative creation is often equated with lying—as in the postmaster's story about Captain Kopeikin or the verbal excesses of Khlestakov—and lying with the demonic.

[122] Norman Bryson discusses European philosophy's historical tendency to associate the image with the real and the verbal with the unnatural in *Word and Image: French painting of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge UP, 1981), pp. 1-28. Bryson interrogates the way in which the terms "figural" and "discursive" have been taken to stand in for the broader opposition "between 'accurate reduplication of the real' and 'alien superimposition of intelligibility,'" p. 9.

And yet, the threat contained within Petromikhali's picture is also partially neutralized by the image's static iconicity. As we have already observed in Gogol's essay on Briullov, a key feature of visual art for Gogol is its inability to deceive; the fact that, in representing its object so perfectly, a painting necessarily conveys that object's true nature. Recall Gogol's characterization of the image's spiritual transparency in "The Last Day of Pompeii": "Moreover, one may say that effects are used to the greatest advantage in painting and in everything in general which we see with our eyes. There, if they are spurious and inappropriate, their spuriousness and inappropriateness is immediately evident to all." In "The Portrait," the crowd within the shop, like Chertkov, immediately recognizes the painting's sinister quality and flees as soon as it gets a good look at the moneylender's face.

The portrait only becomes truly dangerous when it is brought to life: when Petromikhali transforms from a still body (the proper object of painting) to a moving and speaking one (the object of narrative). This transformation arises from a particular set of circumstances that can be read as emblematic of the moment of poetic inspiration that culminates in *verbal* creation. In other words, while Petromikhali's presence is effected through the painting in a way that is natural to the visual arts, it is only when literature symbolically attempts to enter into and merge with the realm of the visual that this presence becomes threatening.[123]

In the temptation scene, light plays a central role. First there is the light of the moon, which spreads across Chertkov's room "like a window": "The moonlight spread across his floor like a bright, white window" [Свет луны ярким белым окном ложился на его пол…] (3:407). The "window" of moonlight opens onto the portrait and illuminates the subject's terrifying eyes:

> The old man's motionless stare was unbearable; his eyes were all a-gleam, absorbing the moonlight, and their life-like quality was so frightening that Chertkov automatically covered his eyes with his hand. A tear seemed to shudder on the old man's eyelashes; the bright twilight, into which the night was transformed by the sovereign moon, increased the effect; the drape slid off, and the old man's fearsome face glared out from the frame as if through a window. (62)
>
> Неподвижный взгляд старика был нестерпим; глаза совершенно светились, вбирая в себя лунный свет, и живость их до такой степени была страшна, что Чертков невольно закрыл свои глаза рукою. Казалось, слеза дрожала на ресницах старика; светлые сумерки, в которые владычица луна превратила ночь, увеличивали действие; полотно пропадало, и страшное лицо старика выдвинулось и глядело из рам, как будто из окошка. (3:408)

[123] In this sense, Gogol's symbolic staging of the dangerous concomitance of the verbal and the visual echoes Western European conceptions of the incongruity of image and text. In an essay on Percy Shelley's ekphrastic poem "On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery" (1819), Grant F. Scott examines the ways in which ekphrasis was sometimes considered a dangerous art by Romantic poets, writing, "Much of the antagonism between the sister arts implicit in Holland's poem originates in a method of approaching the aesthetic object devised by theoreticians of ekphrasis like Lessing. In *Laokoon*, Lessing draws up a set of finely delineated moral and aesthetic boundaries between the arts […] Since painting is innately static, its attempts to portray sequence are necessarily experimental and, for Lessing, dangerous. Any conjunction between the arts, any *ut pictura poesis*, then, must be undertaken (if at all) with a great deal of caution." See Grant F. Scott, "Shelley, Medusa, and the Perils of Ekphrasis," *The Romantic Imagination: Literature and Art in England and Germany*, ed. Frederick Burwick and Jurgen Klein (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 315-332.

At the beginning of this passage, the old man's eyes are "motionless," set in a fixed stare. These eyes are nonetheless frightening in their extraordinary lifelikeness, and we may recall the claim from the earlier passage in the art dealer's shop, that the eyes could not have been more frightening if they had moved: "Они были неподвижны, но, верно, не были бы так ужасны, если бы двигались." And yet now, in Chertkov's attic apartment, as the portrait's eyes "absorb" the moonlight and begin to give the impression of movement, the sinister quality of the painting increases. A tear suddenly seems to appear in the moneylender's eyelashes; finally, his face "glares out from the frame *as if through a window*" (emphasis mine). Two figurative "windows" have now been opened: first, the moonlight becomes a window through which Chertkov views the portrait; illuminated in this way, the portrait itself becomes a second window through which Petromikhali gazes back at Chertkov. Frame becomes window; the previously firm boundary between the artwork and the viewer, between the still and painted *image* of Petromikhali and embodied, temporal reality, becomes permeable and traversable, opening up the possibility of movement, and thus narrative.

Significantly, however, it is not just the moonlight that illuminates and "activates" the painting: a second source of light is also present. Frightened by the eerie effect of the moonlight on the painting, Chertkov calls for the servant to bring his candle. This candle, we learn, is the light source that allows Chertkov to stay up all night working on his paintings as he pursues the laborious path of the true artist. It facilitates his creation and, in this way, can be taken as an externalized figure for Chertkov's own artistic vision, his "inner light," particularly when we recall M.H. Abrams' formulation of the lamp as the central metaphor for Romantic inspiration. Gogol's own statements about artistic creation elsewhere in *Arabesques* suggest that "inner light" (also understood as Imagination; the artist's unique personal vision) must merge with and reveal the divine light that animates all of Nature in order to produce an ideal aesthetic object. This sort of metaphorical convergence is played out literally in the temptation scene: the light of the candle "mingles with the moonlight," the light of Nature, creating a sort of double light which, however, has a negative and transgressive effect here: "the image of the portrait did not recede—the moonlight, mingling with the light of the candle, lent it an even more incomprehensible and at the same time strangely life-like quality" (62) – "придал ему еще более непостижимой и вместе странной живости" (3:408). The interplay of these two sources of illumination—the candle and the moonlight; the artist's vision with the light of Nature—gives rise to the narrative moment that follows: the formerly still image of Petromikhali gains life and steps out of the newly opened fissure of his frame-window.

In this scene, the moment of quintessential Romantic inspiration, when the artist's subjective vision merges with the objective forms of Nature, is revealed to be ethically fraught as well as aesthetically generative when the artwork takes on verbal or narrative, rather than graphic, form. In some ways Chertkov's dream-like vision of Petromikhali resembles a literalization of the poetic or verbal form that represents the height of the *ut pictura poesis* tradition: that is, ekphrasis, which, in its classical definition, "'gives voice and language to the otherwise mute art object.'"[124] In the case of Petromikhali's demonic animation, a moment in a literary text becomes, quite literally, a "speaking picture." And yet the temptation scene in "The Portrait" exceeds the traditional bounds of ekphrasis in its reliance on narrativization rather than just description. If it is true, as scholars of ekphrasis have suggested, that what literature seeks to

[124] George Saintsbury, qtd. in Jean Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (U of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 18.

borrow from visual art in ekphrastic description is the image's spatialization, its status as a still moment in time[125], then the scene of Chertkov's temptation performs the reverse operation. Rather than freezing the narrative text, Petromikhali's animation narrativizes the portrait by allowing its object to traverse its frame and step into the temporal flow of time. As such, Gogol's story contains a more extreme warning than what we might find in concurrent Western Romantic philosophical and poetic discourse about the dangers of ekphrasis. For Gogol, it is not the inherently compromised iconicity of the image which the literary text must avoid borrowing (as per Mitchell's iconophobia); rather, it is narrative that is fraught, and which compromises the iconographic image.

For Gogol, Petromikhali's temptation of Chertkov *must* be narrativized, must be played out as a scene in which the demon uses language to deceive his victim. As a painting, Petromikhali's demonic nature is too evident to effectively beguile. The beautiful painting by Chertkov's former peer, which so strikes Chertkov at the end of Part I of "The Portrait" and which prompts his spiral into insanity, is also instantaneously obvious in its ideality to everyone who observes it. The narrator states, "The whole picture was—*a moment*, but that moment for which a man's whole life is but the preparation" (75) [Вся картина была — мгновение, но то мгновение, к которому вся жизнь человеческая есть одно приготовление] (3:422). This painting, too, elicits transgressive activity (it inspires Chertkov to burn all of the other beautiful paintings he can get his hands on) – but only because of a flaw that is already present in his, the viewer's, soul. Painted images themselves cannot deceive.

The narrator's claim that Chertkov's rival's painting represents a single significant "moment," *mgnovenie*, is important. This claim underscores the extent to which Gogol valorized the static and atemporal in visual art, while also indicating the *type* of painting Gogol valued most highly. This insight in turn gives us a clue as to Gogol's conception of the ideal—if potentially unrealizable—literary form. Following his temptation, Chertkov becomes a painter of fashionable portraits. There is nothing exalted about his art, which is predictable and formulaic, the result of his having abandoned his studies—the careful sketches that we see him pursuing with zeal and dedication at the beginning of the story—in order to paint aristocratic ladies in the guise of Psyche. If "The Portrait" is a Romantic *Künstlerroman*, then the artist-protagonist's *Bildung* is left uncompleted. His rival's *Bildung*, on the other hand, is finished—we know that this rival spent years studying in Italy, dedicated to nothing but his art—and crowned with the magnificent painting that so overwhelms Chertkov at the end of Part I. We are given almost no precise details about the painting, a fact which is in itself telling; we know only that it represents "those secret phenomena which the soul does not know and cannot communicate to another" [те тайные явления, которых душа не умеет, не знает пересказать другому] (3:422). While the Gogolian narrator is able to describe Petromikhali's uncanny portrait in detail, conveying a sense of the sinister image to the reader, he is not yet equal to the task of verbally representing the portrait's opposite, the ideal artwork. Such an account of positive presence will not be attempted until the early 1840s, in "Rome."

Despite the lack of detail we are given about the rival artist's painting, we can extrapolate on the basis of its apparent size and the fact that it portrays multiple figures grouped together ("The startlingly beautiful figures were grouped together in a perfectly natural way, freely"

[125] Murray Krieger writes of ekphrasis, "The object of imitation, as spatial work, becomes the metaphor for the temporal work that seeks to capture it in its temporality. The spatial work freezes the temporal work even as the latter seeks to free it from space." See Krieger, "The Ekphrastic Principle and the Still Movement of Poetry; or *Laokoon* Revisited," *The Play and Place of Criticism* (The Johns Hopkins UP, 1967), p. 107.

[Изумительно прекрасные фигуры группировались непринужденно, свободно] (3:421-422)) that, like Briullov's *The Last Day of Pompeii* and Ivanov's *Appearance of Christ Before the People* (Gogol's two favorite paintings) this work belongs to the genre of history painting. David Green and Peter Seddon define classical history painting as

> the depiction of a story or event taken from the central and defining texts of post-Renaissance European culture, usually the Bible or classical authors of ancient mythology or historical chronicles. Particular emphasis would be placed on the choice of a *significant moment* or action in the story chosen, one in which the immediate antecedents and consequences of the action depicted would be suggested in a clear accessible and meaningful way.[126]

Furthermore, history painting has "an ethical and moral dimension in which viewers would in some sense perceive virtue, a virtue both relevant to their own time and one of a universal timeless kind."[127] In other words, history painting, which tends to be grand in scale and addressed to a public audience, aims to capture the entirety of an exalted narrative (a Bible story or a great historical event) within the representation of a single "significant moment."

Joanna Lowry expands upon the concept of the *significant moment*, attributing its theoretical conceptualization to Diderot, who "described the 'tableau' as the privileged aesthetic form for the representation of the significant historical moment, [when] he called for a unified composition that could in some sense mirror the 'soul,' a concept which represented the psychic state of the beholder."[128] Diderot developed his theory of the significant moment with reference to both dramatic art and history painting,[129] and it is strikingly relevant to the description of Chertkov's rival's artwork. The figures in the painting appear to be grouped in a sort of tableau, and through the expressions on their faces ("In the contours of these divine faces" [В чертах божественных лиц]) the painting conveys in a single moment (*mgnovenie*) a higher, spiritual truth that moves the viewers to tears. The fact that this painting is the fruit of so many years' labor for the young artist, and that it serves as his first major presentation to the public, offers further evidence of its probable genre, as large-scale history painting was considered the crowning achievement of a young artist's development.[130] While Chertkov abandons "precise

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[126] See Green and Seddon's introduction to *History painting reassessed: The representation of history in contemporary art* (Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 2000), p. 7. Emphasis mine.

[127] ibid., p. 7.

[128] Joanna Lowry, "History, Allegory, Technologies of Vision," *History painting reassessed: The representation of history in contemporary art*, p. 109.

[129] Geoffrey Bremner writes: "…Diderot also seems to think that the temporal pattern itself should be reflected in the artist's work. Applied to painting, this notion expresses itself in the necessity of choosing the most significant moment in the representation of an event. When he discusses Challe's *Cleopatre expirante* in the *Salon* of 1761, he objects that Challe ought to have chosen the moment before Cleopatra applied the asp to her breast, not the moment after. 'The choice of the moment of her death does not give us a Cleopatra, it merely gives a woman dying from a snake bite. It is no longer the history of the Queen of Alexandria, but an accident of life.' The implication here is that in each event there is a characteristic moment which carries more significance than any other, and which contains within itself something of the past and the future." See Bremner, *Order and Chaos: The Pattern of Diderot's Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), p. 114.

[130] "All of [the artist's] precise training may have been useful in developing the skills required for other genres of painting, nevertheless history painting was its primary aim and *raison d'etre* and the final end of a long apprenticeship could really only be sealed by the production of a large-scale history painting for either public commission or salon exhibition." See Green and Seddon, *History painting reassessed: The representation of history in contemporary art*, p. 7.

training" for the devil's sachet of gold, his rival offers a glimpse of the true artist's *Bildung*, whose greatest accomplishment is the history painting that manifests an entire spiritually or nationally meaningful narrative in the form of a tableau that captures a single significant moment.

I argue that the "significant moment" of history painting is Gogol's aesthetic ideal. Unlike the literary fragment, which in its incompleteness *gestures toward* the unattainable whole without ever giving the reader a full sense of what that whole looks like, the visual *instant* captured by the painter's brush already contains the whole within itself. The entirety of the historical or biblical narrative, with all its national or spiritual import, is condensed into the painter's chosen moment: both the preceding events and the consequences of the action are clearly implied in that one instant.

A contrast thus emerges between the painting at the center of the rival artist's *Bildung*—the largescale history painting which is the crowning achievement of the artist's career and Gogol's own aesthetic ideal—and the portrait of Petromikhali, which is the dominant artwork in Chertkov's own aborted artist's *Bildung*. In history painting, an exalted narrative is arrested by a representative moment; in the portrait, the arrested figure comes to life and takes on narrative movement. Moreover, the individual figure of Petromikhali represented in the portrait stands in crude contrast to the group composition of history painting, that elevated tableau which for Diderot mirrors the viewer's "soul." In the hierarchy of painterly genres which "The Portrait" constructs—with the gaudy pictures and popular prints of Shchukin Dvor positioned at one end and the rival's magnificent history painting at the other—portraiture emerges as the quintessential bourgeois genre, subject to the demands of the marketplace and the questionable tastes of Petersburg's petty aristocracy. If the tableau of history painting signals a collective spiritual ideal, then the individual subject of portraiture represents egoism and self-interest. In the supernatural portrait of Petromikhali these vices are explicitly diabolical.

In contrast to the instantaneousness of visual effects in "The Portrait," verbal storytelling and narrative situations are repeatedly shown to be dangerous. Petromikhali must gain movement and speech in order to entice Chertkov to sin. Meanwhile, the artist who first painted the moneylender's portrait is unable to tell the story of its composition without activating a curse that will kill a member of his family—thus, while the painting preserves the Antichrist's lifeforce, it is *storytelling* that invites danger. Of course, it is the telling of this same story at the auction in Part II that finally purges the portrait of its malevolent power; however, in order to have this saving effect, the tale must be told in compliance with a strict set of rules that are conveyed to the original painter in a divine vision. The story can only be revealed "when fifty years had passed, at the first new moon" [по истечении пятидесяти лет в первое новолуние] (3:444). Verbal representation is truly safe only when the inspiration behind its composition is undeniably divine. Significantly, when the moneylender's spirit is finally banished from the painting, the portrait is transformed into a harmless landscape – a genre of painting that has little to no potential for narrative movement.

What "The Portrait" uncovers, then, is a paradoxical longing after the status of the fixed and material image, the "significant moment," on the part of a Romantic text that, in theory, seeks to manifest a vision of totality that transcends the particularity of the material. If, as Mitchell argues, moments of ekphrasis and other representations of the plastic arts in Western Romantic poetry tend to first valorize an ideal union of text and image, body and spirit, reality and art (what Mitchell calls the moment of "ekphrastic hope"), this valorization almost always gives way to a second moment, that of "ekphrastic fear"—when the plasticity and immobility of

the mute image threaten to overtake and render similarly immobile and mute the verbal artistry that describes it. For Gogol, however, the reverse is true: while *Arabesques* accepts the Idealist premise that image and text are fundamentally separated by the spatiality/temporality divide, and that the goal of Romantic art is the incarnation of the universal, "The Portrait" tells us that the universal is to be found in the still and eternal moment of the image. Like the beautiful painting by Chertkov's rival, it is "that moment for which a man's whole life is but the preparation."

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Unlike his predecessors in Germany and England, Gogol perceived the perils of any convergence between the visual and verbal arts (in moments of ekphrasis, for instance, or in scenes like the one depicting Petromikhali's animation) to proceed from the inherent dangers of narrative rather than graphic art. This fact will become all the more evident if we take a final look at the temptation sequence, this time paying particular attention to the techniques and devices Gogol uses to describe the scene of Chertkov's downfall. These devices are largely borrowed from painting. Gogol's careful references to moonlight and candlelight in this passage suggest a sort of literary version of chiaroscuro, a painterly technique that, as Gavriel Shapiro has argued, was adopted by literature during the Baroque era,[131] an era whose aesthetic mode Shapiro suggests was particularly influential on Gogol's development as an artist.[132] Shapiro also notes the use of chiaroscuro in Briullov's *The Last Day of Pompeii*, and indeed, in his essay on the painting, Gogol states directly that Briullov's greatest achievement is his use of light. The complex allegorical interplay of light and dark in the temptation scene of "The Portrait" represents a literary manifestation of chiaroscuro, a painterly technique. As a result, the dream scene itself becomes a sort of painting, with Chertkov's shifts between states of consciousness as he falls into and then awakes from sleep functioning as a frame. An attempt is thus made to suspend the narrativization of Petromikhali's portrait, to turn the temptation scene *back* into a painting—this time, a baroque chiaroscuro tableau depicting the allegorical meeting of demon and artist, on the one hand, and of literature and painting, on the other. At the same time that Gogol shows the perils of inflicting narrative's temporality and contingency on the more ideal aesthetic form of painting—by allowing the moonlight to bring Petromikhali to life—he also uses a painterly interplay of shadow and moonlight to claim the image's iconicity for his own narrative.

The attempt doesn't quite work—not least because the scene's painterly sensibility is unique within the larger context of *Arabesques*, which in turn frames "The Portrait." As noted above, the theory of painting and the image that Gogol presents in "The Portrait" and "The Last Day of Pompeii" directly contradicts many of the statements he makes about the hierarchy of artforms in the other essays in *Arabesques*. The contradiction is not surprising, either for Gogol in general (his tendency toward self-contradiction is well established) or for the *Arabesques* collection, which is both formally and thematically haphazard. Recent scholarship has read *Arabesques* as a series of fragments that gesture toward a "whole" or "universal" literary genre, a union of philosophy and art, criticism and poetry. Melissa Frazier has convincingly argued for the conceptual intersection of *Arabesques* and Friedrich Schlegel's articulation of the ideal

[131] "Baroque literature adopted chiaroscuro, putting into practice in yet another way Horace's motto *ut pictura poesis*." Shapiro, *Nikolai Gogol and the Baroque Cultural Heritage*, p. 207.
[132] "Himself an amateur painter, Gogol was certainly familiar with chiaroscuro and particularly its use in Baroque art." Ibid., p. 209.

Romantic genre in his *Dialogue on Poetry* and various works published in *Athenaeum*, where the word "arabesque" is closely associated with the fragment.[133] And yet, as we have seen, Gogol's ideal form is not so much the fragment as it is the *moment*, in particular the "significant moment" of history painting. Knowing that "The Portrait" was originally intended for other collections which never took shape, we may speculate over whether one of those unrealized collections might have provided a more formally and/or thematically fitting frame for Gogol's "Portrait."

The first context for which "The Portrait" may have been intended is the collaborative almanac *Troichatka*, a project that Odoevskii proposed to Gogol and Pushkin in 1831. The second of the proposed collections was Gogol's own *Moonlight in the broken window of an attic on Vasilievskii Island*, traces of which are present in Gogol's working notebook of the early 1830s. In his discussion of the publication history of "The Portrait," S.A. Fomichev suggests, "It can be supposed that the entire book 'Moonlight…' was conceived as a collection of stories about St. Petersburg artists, sculptors, and musicians"[134] [Можно предположить, что вся книга 'Лунный свет…' была задумана как собрание повестей о петербургских художниках, скульпторах, музыкантах], listing "The Portrait" and "Nevsky Prospect" as the two likeliest contenders for inclusion in the collection.[135] One is tempted to add "Diary of a Madman" to the list. Although the story was written in 1834, its earlier instantiation as the "Diary of a Mad Musician"—another variant on the Romantic *Künstlerroman*—suggests that Gogol may have begun planning the story as early as 1832. Evidence from a letter to I.I. Dmitriev on 30 November 1832 reveals that Gogol was intrigued by Odoevskii's (ultimately unrealized) plan to publish a collection titled "The Madhouse," which would feature stories "in the mold of 'Beethoven's [Last] Quartet'" [в роде Квартета Бетгховена (sic)]—that is, a series of artist's stories in which the artists go insane.

I argue that, had it been realized, *Moonlight in the broken window…* may have provided a more fitting frame for "The Portrait" than *Arabesques* and may even have contributed to the story's greater aesthetic success. The image of moonlight shining through the window into an artist's attic, which is both the title of the proposed collection and a precise description of the setting of Chertkov's temptation, suggests a unifying emblem, one which we can suppose might have been repeated in each of the *Künstlerromane* in the anthology. Repeated imagery and image patterns are one of the ways in which writers attempt to spatialize narrative and arrest temporal flow.[136] The repetition of the key emblem promised by the title of *Moonlight in the broken window…* suggests that this collection, had it been written, would have come closer to achieving the sort of formal totality—dependent upon an elision of the space/time divide through the incorporation of painterly techniques within the literary text—that Gogol so deeply desired in the 1830s, and which he was unable to achieve in *Arabesques*.

III. "Rome," *Annunziata*, and Visions of Totality

The belief that the universal is to be found in the static yet eternal moment that is the primary domain of the visual and plastic arts finds further expression in "Rome." Published in

[133] See Frazier, *Frames of the Imagination: Gogol's 'Arabesques' and the Romantic Question of Genre*.
[134] Translation mine.
[135] Fomichev, *Prazdnik zhizni: Etiudy o Pushkine* (SPB: Nauka, 1995), p. 196.
[136] See Murray Krieger, "The Ekphrastic Principle and the Still Movement of Poetry"; W.J.T. Mitchell, "Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Spring 1980), pp. 539-567; and Mack Smith, *Literary Realism and the Ekphrastic Tradition* (Penn State UP, 1995).

Moskvitianin in 1842, "Rome" bears the subtitle "fragment" [*otryvok*] and is presented as the first section of the unfinished novel *Annunziata,* on which Gogol began work in 1839. The story is Gogol's most sustained and, I would argue, his most optimistic attempt to claim the affordances of visual and plastic art for literature in order to represent presence. Written during the same creative period that produced Vol. 1 of *Dead Souls*, "Rome" marks a further stage in Gogol's experiments with turning forms from the visual arts into emblems for ideal aesthetic creation within his own literary texts.[137] Unlike "The Portrait," in "Rome" Gogol seeks to reproduce the presence of the good and beautiful rather than that of the profane. In this later text, painting and literature appear to be potentially commensurate in their ability to convey true beauty (what Gogol refers to as *polnaia krasota*) and a sense of the eternal moment. "Rome" is therefore unique among Gogol's fictional works in that it does not elide representations of the ideal: it is a text that everywhere strives to convey a sense of presence and plenitude. Tellingly, the construction *ne to* and its entire constellation of related Gogolian prevarications—the pleonasms, paradoxes, and nonsense constructions that are the hallmarks of Gogol's art—are almost entirely absent from "Rome's" linguistic fabric.

As we shall see, "Rome" presents two primary objects of representation as potentially ideal—that is, as consummate sources of aesthetic inspiration, objects that are already whole and perfect in themselves. Unlike other Gogolian texts, "Rome" depicts these ideal objects directly, as presence; in fact, both can be read as the doubles of absences in other works. The first is Annunziata, the beautiful woman from the Alban hills who is spotted by the protagonist, a young Roman prince, at the beginning of the narrative, and who serves as the impetus for his movement around the city as he tries to discover her name and identity. Annunziata is the embodiment of ideal female beauty. With the exception of peripheral figures like Ulinka in Vol. 2 of *Dead Souls* and a few of the village maidens in *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka* [*Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki*], Annunziata is the only positive female figure in Gogol's fictional universe.[138] As such, she can be read as the embodied double of such spectral or absent figures as Piskarev's fantasy woman in "Nevsky Prospect." In that story, idealized female beauty is present only as an absence: the woman whom Piskarev, deceived by the glimmering half-light of Nevsky Prospect, initially takes to be "'An enchanting girl; a real Bianca Perrugina'" (156) [чудная, совершенно Перуджинова Бианка] (3:15), is in reality a prostitute whose inability to embody Piskarev's ideal eventually drives him insane. The reference to Pietro Perugino in Piskarev's first encounter with his object of desire is significant. Perugino (1446-1523) was an Italian Renaissance painter and the teacher of Raphael, one of Gogol's favorite artists. "Bianca Perrugina" refers to the image of the Madonna in Perugino's fresco *Adoration of the Magi*, located in the chapel of the Santa Maria dei Bianchi.[139] Piskarev's mistake, then, is to project a highly aestheticized religious ideal onto a flesh-and-blood woman who is incapable of ever conforming to that ideal.

The question of whether reality is capable of living up to artistic vision is a major concern of the *Künstlerroman* genre, and one that could be considered more or less central to all three of

[137] Gippius describes "Rome" as Gogol's "esthetic manifesto" of the period between his departure abroad in 1836 and the publication of *Dead Souls* in 1842. Gippius writes, "Only 'Rome' gave full expression to that extreme intensity of pure esthetic awareness as it was experienced by Gogol in the second half of the 1830s." See Gippius, *Gogol'*, p. 103.

[138] In his nonfiction writings, echoes of Annunziata are found in the essays "Woman" [Zhenshchina] from 1831 and "Woman in the World" [Zhenshchina v svete] from 1846.

[139] See the *primechaniia* to "Nevsky Prospect" in N.V. Gogol, *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh* (Moscow: Iz'stvo "Khudozhestvennaia literature," 1966)

the artist's tales in *Arabesques*. It is the organizing question of "Nevsky Prospect," and the protagonists' madness in both "The Portrait" and "Diary of a Mad Musician"—the prototype for "Diary of a Madman"—arises as a reaction against the perceived disjunction between desire, expressed in the form of art, and the real world. The genre of the fragment is also in some sense a product of this disjunction. According to the Jena Romantics' understanding of artistic creation, desire for unity and plenitude is eternally frustrated; this frustrated desire takes the form of the fragment, which gestures toward, but never attains, the whole. The difference between the aesthetic fragment and the fragmentary experience of madness lies in the control the dreamer-poet has over the forms of his creation and the subsequent artistic success of those forms. I argue that *Arabesques* exists somewhere between these two types of fragmentation, and that anxiety over the potential slippage between Romantic fragmentation and the fragmentation of disordered thinking is one reason Gogol sought to avoid the fragment by looking to the visual emblem and painting's "significant moment" instead.

While neither "The Portrait" nor *Arabesques* quite achieves Gogol's desired convergence between the spatial and narrative arts and *Moonlight in the broken window…* was left unrealized, "Rome" comes closer than any of these earlier texts to offering an optimistic vision of narrative imbued with the forms of painting. One reason for this success is that, in "Rome," the questions of reality living up to art (the preoccupation of the *Künstlerroman*), or of art measuring up to reality (the concern of ekphrasis), are immaterial. Nearly the entirety of the represented world (i.e., the extra-literary reality to which the text claims to refer, Rome during carnival season) is aestheticized from the outset, even before the narrator turns his gaze—mediated at times through the prince, whose native Roman aesthetic sensibilities are well-developed[140]—onto that world. Many of Rome's locations and everyday objects have already been turned into works of art by the Roman people, who strew flower petals on the streets to mimic mosaics and turn cheeses into models of classical architecture.[141] Even people and objects that have not undergone this aestheticizing treatment are always on the verge of transforming into picturesque landscapes or charming genre paintings; not, it seems, because the narrator (or his part-time proxy, the prince) sees them that way, but because of an inherent quality they possess, according to which the entire represented world of "Rome" is already so close to perfection as to be a work of art. Because of

[140] In a move that is highly uncharacteristic for Gogol, there is virtually no distance between the prince's perspective and the perspective of the narrator. As Robert Maguire notes, "Although the prince is an intellectual and cultural lightweight, his views and activities are presented with only an occasional touch of irony or sarcasm; we are obviously meant to take them seriously." See Maguire, *Exploring Gogol*, p. 133.

[141] Gogol's Romans are natural artists: "Потом черты природного художественного инстинкта и чувства: он видел, как простая женщина указывала художнику погрешность в его картине; он видел, как выражалось невольно это чувство в живописных одеждах, в церковных убранствах, как в Дженсано народ убирал цветочными коврами улицы, как разноцветные листики цветов обращались в краски и тени, на мостовой выходили узоры, кардинальские гербы, портрет папы, вензеля, птицы, звери и арабески" (3:214) ["Then there are the features of innate artistic instinct and feeling: He had seen a simple woman point out to an artist an error in his painting; he had seen how this feeling was involuntarily expressed in picturesque clothing, in church decorations, how in Genzano the people would deck the streets with carpets made of flowers, how the multicolored flower petals turned into colors and shadows, on the pavement would emerge patterns, cardinals' coats of arms, a portrait of the Pope, monograms, birds, beasts, and arabesques"] (trans. Susanne Fusso in "Rome," *The Nose and Other Stories* [NY: Columbia UP, 2020], p. 259. Subsequent citations to this translation of "Rome" will appear parenthetically in the text by page number). Andreas Schönle agrees that the Roman people in Gogol's depiction are both consistently made the object of aestheticization, and themselves engaged in aestheticizing their own surroundings. The Romans' natural taste and artistic sensibilities allow them to work in concert with the narrator of "Rome" to transform the city into a consummate artistic creation. See Schönle, "Gogol, the Picturesque, and the Desire for the People: A Reading of 'Rome,'" *The Russian Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (October 2000), pp. 597-613.

Rome's intrinsic beauty, the spiritual and aesthetic harmony that characterize every aspect of its being, little work is required of the writer or artist who seeks to transfer that beauty onto paper: the signifier, in the form of a beautiful phrase or striking brushstroke, is already inherent in the signified. For most of the story, the most perfect example of this ideal correspondence between signifier and signified is Annunziata.

The Petersburg prostitute who becomes the object of Piskarev's desire in "Nevsky Prospect" can only live up to Piskarev's first perception of her as Perugino's Madonna in his opium-induced dreams. By contrast, Annunziata *is* a work of art, a living Madonna. Her name recalls the Annunciation; Gogol briefly considered calling the novel *Madonna dei Fiori*, Madonna of the Flowers. Almost immediately, in the story's third line, Annunziata is likened to a classical sculpture: "Everything about her recalls those ancient times when marble came to life and sculptors' chisels gleamed" (229) [Все напоминает в ней те античные времена, когда оживлялся мрамор и блистали скульптурные резцы] (3:217). The implied relationship between nature and art in this sentence is suggestive. Annunziata, a living woman, calls to mind Greek sculpture; Greek sculpture is valorized as "marble come to life." Life resembles art, which resembles life: the gap between signifier and signified, form and content, diminishes. This ideal correlation between artistic sign and living referent is emblematic of art's representation of presence through signs.

The equation of Annunziata to a classical sculpture soon gives way to the suggestion that she has even greater affinities with Gogol's favorite of the sister arts, painting:

> Wherever she goes—she already brings with her painting: whether she hurries in the evening to the fountain with a wrought copper vase on her head—her surroundings become suffused with miraculous harmony: more lightly do the marvelous lines of the Alban hills recede, bluer are the depths of the Roman sky, more erect the cypress flies upward, and the beauty of the southern trees, the Roman *pinna*, thinner and more purely is drawn against the sky its umbrella-like top almost swimming in the air. And everything: the very fountain, where the Alban women are already gathered in a bunch on the marble stairs, one taller than the other, conversing in stronger silver voices, while the water strikes in a ringing diamond arc into the copper vats being placed in turn under the fountain, and the fountain itself, the crowd itself—everything, it seems, is for her, in order to more vividly show her triumphant beauty, so that it becomes clear how she leads everyone, like a queen leads her retinue.[142]
>
> Куда ни пойдет она—уже несет с собой картину: спешит ли ввечеру к фонтану с кованой медной вазой на голове, —вся проникается чудным согласием обнимающая ее окрестность: легче уходят вдаль чудесные линии альбанских гор, синее глубина римского неба, прямей летит вверх кипарис, и красавица южных дерев, римская пинна, тонее и чище рисуется на небе своею зонтикообразною, почти плывущею на воздухе верхушкою. И всё: и самый фонтан, где уже столпились в кучу на мраморных ступенях, одна выше другой, альбанские горожанки, переговаривающиеся сильными серебряными голосами, пока поочередно бьет вода звонкой алмазной дугой в подставляемые медные чаны, и самый фонтан, и самая толпа—все,

[142] Translation mine.

> кажется, для нее, чтобы ярче выказать торжествующую красоту, чтобы видно было, как она предводит всем, подобно как царица предводит за собою придворный чин свой. (3:217-218)

Not only does Annunziata herself appear as the living embodiment of a (living) Greek sculpture; her mere presence effects automatic aestheticization, transfiguring everything around her into a painting. Neither the organizing gaze nor the brush and canvas of the artist are necessary: following Annunziata, the world *organizes itself* into a perfect *paysage*. A young artist, catching sight of Annunziata, thinks, "'There you would have a marvelous model for Diana, for proud Juno, for the seductive Graces, and for all women who have ever been transferred to canvas!'" (231). ['То то была бы чудная модель для Дианы, гордой Юноны, соблазнительных Граций и всех женщин, какие только предавались на полотно'] (3:219). In a marked reversal of the Petersburg society ladies in "The Portrait" whose image Chertkov must carefully manipulate to produce even a pale and formulaic likeness of Psyche or Juno, Annunziata, as the ideal model, is herself already a manifestation of that perfect beauty of which Psyche and Juno are also manifestations. Annunziata, we are told later, is "*polnaia krasota*," complete or perfect beauty; not merely beautiful, but beauty itself: "This truly was the sun, complete beauty. Everything that is scattered and gleams separately in the beauties of the world, all this was gathered together here" (264) [Это именно было солнце, полная красота. Все, что рассыпалось и блистает поодиночке в красавицах мира, все это собралось сюда вместе] (3:248). Other women reflect only fragments of that great beauty of which they are a part. Annunziata is the physical manifestation of that spiritual beauty in its entirety, and thus an emblem for the ideal artwork, capable of representing totality.

Annunziata's beauty is so powerful that it reverses the standard dynamic between model and artist. According to the traditional dynamic, the artist maintains total control over the object of representation and must find a means of fusing his personal artistic vision with his observation of reality, for example, the exact curvature of a model's neck or the color of her dress. We have seen how this traditional artist/model dynamic closely informs the stories and essays in *Arabesques*. In "Rome," by contrast, Annunziata's presence turns everyone who beholds her into an artist: "Her arms existed in order to turn everyone into an artist—like an artist, he would have looked at them eternally, not daring to breathe" (264) [Ее руки были для того, чтобы всякого обратить в художника— как художник, глядел бы он на них вечно, не смея дохнуть] (3:248). It is now the model, the object of representation, that holds the key to aesthetic transformation. A few lines later, there is an escalation in her transformative powers, as the entire world around her becomes "an artist": "[…] everything that there was, it seemed, turned into an artist and stared fixedly at her alone"[143] [все, что ни было, казалось, превратилось в художника и смотрело пристально на одну ее] (3:248-249). It is easy to see why this image of perfect self-aestheticizing beauty would have appealed to Gogol in the early 1840s. Annunziata is both the answer to the earlier *Künstlerromane* of *Arabesques*, with their insistence on the absence of any sort of representable ideal; and a prefiguration of the spiritual beauty that Gogol believed he would be effortlessly guided to portray in the later volumes of *Dead Souls*.

Of course, while the narrative of "Rome" is designed to give the impression that Annunziata's presence naturally produces the series of picturesque images that in turn generate the text, that design is consciously enacted. While the prince and the various carnival-goers perceive Annunziata's beauty unmediated, we as Gogol's readers experience it only as it is

[143] Translation mine.

conveyed to us through the verbal texture of Gogol's story—as much as that story would have us believe otherwise. The question now becomes: How does the text of "Rome" set out to approximate the miraculous effect of Annunziata's presence? In "The Portrait," we saw how Gogol's narrative entered into a conflict with its own conceptualization of ideal aesthetic representation, which was revealed to be the exclusive province of visual art. In "Rome," ideal representation is still held to be static in form and instantaneous in its effect; however, unlike "The Portrait," "Rome" believes in the ability of literature to approximate the immediate and overwhelming sensation experienced by the viewer who beholds a great painting such as *The Last Day of Pompeii*. "Rome" seeks to convey an image of true beauty, *polnaia krasota*, through a careful alternation of static description and sequential narrative, which is set in motion at the start of the story by the appearance of Annunziata.

"Rome" opens with a verbal approximation of an instant frozen in time. The narrator asks the reader to "Try to look at lightning when, having cut the clouds as black as coal, it trembles unbearably with an entire flood of light"[144] [Попробуй взглянуть на молнию, когда, раскроивши черные, как уголь, тучи, нестерпимо затрепещет она целым потопом блеска] (3:217). Not only is lightning a perfect figure for the effect that Annunziata's beauty has on the viewer, and which the narrator hopes to convey—it is both instantaneous and all-encompassing ("затрепещет она целым потопом блеска"); it overwhelms the senses—but, by opening with the imperative to "try to catch a glimpse" (perfective "vzglianut'") of such a brief flash of time, the narrator immediately arrests the reader's imagination, forcing her to try to visualize an image that is the very embodiment of instantaneousness.

The device successfully achieves the effect that Gogol never quite managed to attain in *Arabesques*, despite his experiments with chiaroscuro-like description in "The Portrait." Arresting the narrative flow of time, this technique spatializes the literary text. It is worth noting that the device resembles one which Norman Bryson has seen as key to Diderot's attempts to spatialize his verbal descriptions of the theater: Diderot's repeated injunction to his reader to "Imagine" a dramatic scene unfolding: "the repeated word 'Imagine' induces a stasis, for what Diderot wants is an accumulation of small acts of imagination within a single space […] until the *Bildung* emerges."[145] The ultimate goal of this accumulation of "small acts of the imagination," for Diderot, is to overcome the sequentiality of verbal description, to convey the impression in his own mind directly into the mind of his reader by converting discourse into image—what Diderot calls the hieroglyph, and which Bryson refers to as the "transparent sign."

By asking the reader of "Rome" to imagine what it would be like to look directly at lightning in the moment of its flashing, Gogol paradoxically begins his narrative with a moment of stasis: the reader pauses to visualize an all-encompassing crash of light. This visualization is akin to Diderot's "small act of the imagination": a single word-picture that will then be followed by an accumulation of other word-pictures, which together will produce an emblematic moment, something like Diderot's hieroglyph or Bryson's transparent sign. This emblem, again like the hieroglyph, manifests presence by making the artist's thought directly and fully perceptible to the mind of the reader. It borrows the iconicity of the image in order to replace the absence inherent to verbal signs with the presence of the visual. I would posit that, had the anthology been written, the accumulation of moonlight scenes in *Moonlight in the broken window…* may have worked in a similar way.

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[144] Translation mine.

[145] Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French painting of the Ancien Régime*, p. 181

These word-pictures continue to accumulate as the narrative progresses, and we learn that the flash of lightning the reader is asked to visualize in the opening line is actually the sensation of Annunziata's eyes. These eyes continue to acquire presence in the text through compounded images. When Annunziata turns her face to someone, "образ ее весь отпечатлелся в сердце": her image is "imprinted" on the viewer's heart, a poetic figure that recalls the instantaneous and overwhelming effect of the visualized flash of lightning. This opening description of Annunziata works by layering a series of associated images one atop the other—lightning, eyes, imprint—rather than relying on a mimetic but piecemeal account of her individual traits (complexion, face, figure), which would fragment the reader's image of her beauty.

Apart from a few cursory descriptions of Annunziata's hair (a "thick resin" gathered in two heavy braids atop her head) and shoulders (which are blessed with a "beauty not seen by the earth"), the narrator seeks to convey the fullness of her presence as if entire and all at once by claiming that Annunziata "carries a painting with her wherever she goes," a claim that generates a further series of images which in turn intensify the static, spatialized quality of the description. Faced with the task of depicting perfect beauty, *polnaia krasota*—of finally representing the ideal presence whose absence had so haunted the *Künstlerromane* of *Arabesques*—Gogol resorts to layering a series of verbal "paintings" that are at an increasingly distant remove from the actual object of representation.

The examples the narrator provides to show how Annunziata "carries a painting with her wherever she goes"—the Alban hills; the soaring cypress; the women gathered on the steps of the marble fountain—all resemble popular landscape and genre paintings of the day. These images—which are from the outset linked closely with the characterization of Annunziata, as examples of the types of scenes that are harmoniously enhanced by her presence ("her surroundings become suffused with miraculous harmony")—then give way to a second series of images. After concluding that the first set of images highlights "how she leads everyone, like a queen leads her retinue," the narrator goes on,

> On a feast day, when the dark gallery of trees leading from Albano to Castel Gandolfo is all full of festively dressed folk, when under its dusky vaults one can glimpse foppish *minenti* in their velvet finery, with bright sashes and a golden flower on their felt hats; donkeys plod along or rush at a gallop with half-closed eyes, picturesquely carrying the shapely and strong women of Albano and Frascati, whose white headdresses glisten into the distance; or not at all picturesquely, with difficulty and stumbling, they drag along a tall motionless Englishman in a pea-green waterproof mackintosh, who has crooked his legs into a sharp angle, so as not to catch onto the ground with them; or they carry an artist in a smock, with a wooden box on a strap and a cunning Van Dyck beard; and the shadows and the sun pass by turns over the whole group—even then, even on that feast day, it is far better with her present than without her. Out of the dusky darkness in the depths of the gallery she emerges, all sparkling, all brilliance. The purple cloth of her Albano finery flashes like a hot coal touched by the sun. A marvelous feast day flies out of her face to meet everyone. (230-231)
>
> В праздничный ли день, когда темная древесная галерея, ведущая из Альбано в Кастель-Гандольфо, вся полна празднично убранного народа, когда мелькают под сумрачными ее сводами щеголи миненти в бархатном

> убранстве, с яркими поясами и золотистым цветком на пуховой шляпе, бредут или несутся вскачь ослы с полузажмуренными глазами, живописно неся на себе стройных и сильных альбанских и фраскатанских женщин, далеко блистающих белыми головными уборами, или таща вовсе не живописно, с трудом и спотыкаясь, длинного неподвижного англичанина в гороховом непроникаемом макинтоше, скорчившего в острый угол свои ноги, чтобы не зацепить или земли, или неся художника в блузе, с деревянными ящиком на ремне и ловкой вандиковской бородкой, а тень и солнце бегут попеременно по всей группе—и тогда, и в оный праздничный день при ней далеко лучше, чем вез нее. Глубина галереи выдает ее из сумрачной темноты своей всю сверкающую, всю в блеске. Пурпурное сукно альбанского ее наряда вспыхивает, как ищерь, тронутое солнцем. Чудныйпраздник летит излица ее навстречу всем. (3:218)

This second set of images—the festively dressed Roman crowd with bright belts and flowers in their hats; the donkeys with half-closed eyes carrying slender Italian women in white headdresses; even the un-picturesque Englishman in his Macintosh—all resemble contemporary genre paintings even more closely than the first series of images, especially when we consider the painterly play of light and shadow in these scenes. However, this second set of images, too, turns out to be a part of the overarching description of Annunziata, the central object of representation: "even then, even on that feast day, it is far better with her present than without her."

Frozen by the opening imperative to "Try to look at lightning," the narrative remains arrested for the first few pages, which are given over to an elaboration of the imagined paintings generated by Annunziata's appearance against the backdrop of various Roman scenes. These descriptions increase the reader's perception of Annunziata's presence by generating a series of hypothetical paintings that, for a reader of Gogol's cultural milieu, would have had a whole succession of real paintings standing behind them.[146] Indeed, Gogol scholars have identified a number of specific paintings by artists living in Italy in the first few decades of the 19th century that these images may refer to.[147] The representation of Annunziata's beauty, then, becomes a

[146] Bryson's analysis of Diderot's language for translating images into words is again useful. In his reading of the *Salons*, in which it was Diderot's task to describe the paintings on exhibit at the Louvre to readers unable to visit the museum themselves, Bryson argues that Diderot's descriptions are entirely successful because, while vivid, fanciful, and even erotically suggestive, the language of the *Salons* is also "a language entirely backed by visual fact: each word has behind it a demonstrable piece of canvas […] everything is saturated with an original presence and in this respect the language of the Salon-piece is already ideal." See Bryson, *Word and Image: French painting of the Ancien Régime*, p. 183.

[147] The most significant contribution in this regard is Sigrid Richter's 1964 Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Hamburg, titled "Rom und Gogol'. Gogol's Romerlebnis und sein Fragment 'Rim.'" Robert Maguire also identifies a number of paintings that may be the original referents of the landscapes and carnival scenes in "Rome" (pp. 124-128). Particularly striking for the purposes of my argument is Maguire's identification of the Albano and Castel Gandolfo motif in Romantic landscape painting, as well as his mention of Marc-Gabriel-Charles-Gleyre's *La Nubienne* (1838), "only one of countless renditions of colorfully dressed and dazzlingly beautiful girls clustered around a fountain" (p. 124). Maguire does not link *La Nubienne* to Annunziata specifically, but the painting is striking for its resemblance to Gogol's opening descriptions of the Alban beauty: Gleyre's model has pale skin and braided black hair and carries a copper vase on her head (recall: "Куда ни пойдет она—уже несет с собой картину: спешит ли ввечеру к фонтану с кованой медной вазой на голове…"). Maguire's reading of the opening pages of "Rome" has some points in common with my own. He also reads the description of Annunziata and the scenes that follow as distinctly painterly, as does Richter. However, both Maguire and Richter seem to

sort of exhibition chamber in the reader's mind: a mental space that houses a series of vibrant scenes of Roman life. The final painting in this imagined exhibition is the one that the young artist with the Van Dyck beard fantasizes about adding to his own studio: the portrait of Annunziata as Diana or Juno.

Gogol thus attempts to verbally convey the instantaneous and all-encompassing effect of Annunziata's beauty by creating a language that arrests the narrative and throws it into stasis before it can even begin. Rather than narrative movement, "Rome" opens with a gradually expanding sense of space. The opposition between space and movement in the opening pages of "Rome" goes deeper than the traditional distinction between description and narrative, which scholars have tended to view as central to the emergence of realism (wherein extended, non-essential description is seen as a function of the realist commitment to "lifelikeness").[148] As we have seen, the characterization of Annunziata's appearance in the first few pages of the text relies not on a sequential description of her physical traits—which would have the effect of fragmenting her beauty—but on an expanding group of "painted" images that each reflect that beauty, and which appear in the reader's imagination as though framed and displayed on an exhibition wall. This imaginative framing, along with the emphasis on aesthetic mediation in the introduction of Annunziata, place this opening portrayal far from the realm of "realist" description.

I have dwelt so long on the first few pages of "Rome" because the initial description of Annunziata offers the text's most concentrated and sustained representation of total beauty, as well as the most significant passage in Gogol's experimentation with merging elements of visual form and narrative. With the exception of the second, briefer description of Annunziata that appears toward the end of the text, most of what follows after these opening pages is an elaboration on Annunziata's status as the manifestation of *polnaia krasota*. Narrative time is introduced into the text with the appearance of the prince, whose personal history takes up the bulk of the story. Since the main function of this personal history is to elaborate the theory of beauty and art presented in the opening description of Annunziata, even when the temporal dimension finally enters the text, it does so not in the service of generating a plot—of initiating a sequence of actions—but of expanding our understanding of the text's opening moment. The narrative remains subordinated to the static image of beauty with which the text began, and to which it will return, many pages later, once the prince's biography is accounted for.

The most significant detail to emerge from the biographical account of the prince's education and youthful travels abroad is the constructed opposition between Paris and Rome, and the way in which each city comes to embody a different conception of art.[149] Notably, what most distinguishes the respective aesthetic principles on which these two cities are built is their opposing relationship to fragmentation. Gogol's Paris, which closely resembles Gogol's

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interpret these descriptions as part of a single large painting, with Annunziata at its center, rather than as a series of distinct images that are layered to convey a sense of expanding space. See Maguire, *Exploring Gogol*, pp. 122-124.

[148] For a summary and critique of the tendency in literary scholarship to view description as fundamentally "realistic," see Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect" (1969), *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard, ed. Francois Wahl (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1989), pp. 141-148. For a dialectical approach to realism which views realist discourse as synthesizing an earlier "narrative impulse" (linked to Romanticism) with an emergent tendency toward scenic description ("affect," associated with modernism), see Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (London & New York: Verso, 2013).

[149] Michael R. Kelly observes that "a discussion of the contrasting aesthetic values associated with Paris and Rome is commonplace in scholarship on 'Rome.'" See Kelly, "Gogol's 'Rome': On the Threshold of Two Worlds," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Spring 2003), p. 25.

Petersburg, is home to the negative kind of fragmentation: the fragment without a larger artistic whole to give it meaning, which is associated in Gogol's world with madness. Rome, on the other hand, is characterized by the positive variant of Romantic fragmentation: each fragment of experience—each painting, monument, flower, fountain, and food stall that the prince encounters in his wandering—contributes to a single, unified experience of Rome; each is infused with the same general Roman spirit.[150] The prince is initially attracted to the glitter and novelty of Parisian life: in a moment that clearly recalls the descriptions of Nevsky Prospect in Gogol's Petersburg stories, the narrator concludes his account of the prince's first impressions of the city thus:

> […] now finally losing his bearings completely, when this whole magical pile flared up in the evening by the magical illumination of gaslight—all the buildings suddenly became transparent, shining powerfully from below; the windows and panes of glass in the stores seemed to disappear, to vanish completely, and everything that lay inside them was left out on the street unguarded, sparkling and reflected by the mirrors into the depths. (236)
>
> […] то растерявшись, наконец, совсем, когда вся эта волшебная куча вспыхнула ввечеру при волшебном освещении газа—все домы вдруг стали прозрачными, сильно засиявши снизу; окна и стекла в магазинах, казалось, исчезли, пропали вовсе, и все, что лежало внутри их, осталось прямо среди улицы нехранимо, блистая и отражаясь в углубленье зеркалами. (3:223)

[150] Susanne Fusso has discussed the positive and negative types of fragmentation in Gogol in terms of the different ways in which one can look at a landscape. She argues that, for Gogol, the ideal is a vantage point that combines "detail" (fragment) with "overview" (whole), as in Briullov's *The Last Day of Pompeii*: "For Gogol, detail without overview is embodied in the demonic fragmentation of nineteenth-century life […] But overview without differentiation leads to monotony and excessive abstraction, as in the panoramic paintings that Gogol opposes to those of Briullov" (Fusso, "The Landscape of *Arabesques*, p. 113). The solution is to combine intricacy and variation (the positive type of fragment) with a simultaneous conceptualization of a larger whole; one must look at the details of the landscape close-up *as well as* from a position of panoramic overview. Fusso is concerned primarily with *Arabesques* and *Dead Souls* in her analysis, rather than "Rome"; however, the same marriage of detailed examination and sweeping panorama is clearly present in the prince's Roman wanderings. At times he sets off "like a hunter" into the side streets of Rome, seeking new aesthetic impressions: "Ему нравились эти беспрерывные внезапности, нежданности, поражающие в Риме. Как охотник, выходящий с утра на ловлю, как старинный рыцарь, искатель приключений, он отправлялся отыскивать всякий день новых и новых чудес…" (3:234) [He liked these incessant suddennesses, unexpectednesses, that struck you in Rome. Like a hunter who goes out in the morning to the chase, like an ancient knight seeking adventures, he would set off every day to seek out more and more new miracles…] (249). At other times he climbs to a high vantage point to look out over the Roman *Campagna* and admire it in all directions. His understanding of Italian history is conceptualized in similar terms: "Среди сей жизни почувствовал он, более нежели когда-либо, желание проникнуть поглубже историю Италии, доселе ему известную эпизодами, отрывками; без нее казалось ему неполно настоящее, и он жадно принялся за архивы, летописи и записки […] Он теперь мог оглядывать все покойно, *как из ватиканского окна*" (emphasis mine) (3:240) [In the midst of this life he felt more than ever the need to penetrate more deeply into the history of Italy, which he had known up to now only in episodes and fragments; without that history, the present seemed incomplete to him, and he avidly set about reading archives, chronicles, and notes] (254-55). Michael R. Kelly echoes Fusso's analysis of *Arabesques* in his reading of "Rome," writing, "The prince's attempt to acquire an understanding of the 'majestic flow of the whole' points to a similarity of themes and motifs between 'Rome' and *Arabesques* and further underscores the connection of 'Rome' to key issues in Gogol's oeuvre […] 'Rome' is one of Gogol's most complete attempts to embody in a work of fiction the aesthetic ideals expressed in *Arabesques*." See Kelly, "Gogol's 'Rome': On the Threshold of Two Worlds," p. 31.

Unlike the unfortunate Piskarev, however, the prince learns to see past the deceptive "magical illumination" of the streetlamps. Possessing a true vision that is unique among Gogol's protagonists, the prince comes to understand that Paris consists entirely of "glittering episodes" with no harmonious whole to connect them: "[…] везде блестящие эпизоды, и нет торжественного, величавого теченья всего целого." In Rome, by contrast, every archway, icon, and storefront is part of the same congruous unity, and the contemporary world and the world of antiquity meet harmoniously on the Roman streets.[151]

This distinction between harmful Parisian fragmentation and the exemplary Roman fragment has clear resonances with Gogol's larger aesthetic theory as it developed in the second half of the 1830s. When the narrator says of Paris that "the whole nation is a brilliant vignette, rather than a painting by a great master" [вся нация—блестящая виньетка, а не картина великого мастера] we recall Gogol's valorization of large-scale history painting in *Arabesques*. And yet in a marked departure from *Arabesques*' works of fiction, "Rome" is willing to depict the positive alternative to the fragmented European city. The pages detailing the prince's experience of his native city after arriving home from his years abroad are perhaps the most extended description of positive aesthetic beauty in all of Gogol's fiction.

The culmination of this extended vision of the mutual co-creation of the part and the whole, detail and overview, fragment and unity, comes at the very end of the story, when the prince, together with Peppe, the peasant whom he has enlisted to help him track down Annunziata, climbs to a high point overlooking the city. Just as he is about to tell Peppe about Annunziata, the prince catches sight of Rome spread out beneath them and is struck with wonder:

> But here the prince glanced at Rome and stopped: Before him, in a marvelous, shining panorama, the eternal city appeared. The whole bright heap of houses, churches, domes, and sharp spires was powerfully illuminated by the brilliance of the sinking sun. In groups and singly, the houses, roofs, statues, airy terraces, and galleries emerged out from behind one another; over there was the motley mass of bell towers and domes with their delicate tops, playing in the patterned caprice of the lamps; over there a dark palace emerged in its entirety; over there was the flat dome of the Pantheon; over there was the ornamented top of the Antonio column with its capital and the statue of the apostle Paul […] (276)
>
> Но здесь князь взглянул на Рим и остановился: пред ним в чудной сияющей панораме предстал вечный город. Вся светлая груда домов, церквей, куполов, остроконечий сильно освещена была блеском понизившегося солнца. Группами и поодиночке один из-за другого выходили домы, крыши, статуи, воздушные террасы и галереи; там пестрела и разыгрывалась масса тонкими верхушками колоколен и куполов с узорною капризностью фонарей; там выходил целиком темный дворец; там плоский купол Пантеона; там убранная верхушка Антониновской колонны с капителью и статуей апостола Павла […] (3:258)

[151] "Rome" sketches a clear contrast between Parisian bourgeois modernity, on the one hand, and the pre-modern popular life of Rome, on the other. The former echoes Balzac's critical representations of Paris under the July Monarchy in *La comedie humaine* (1829-48); the latter recalls the medieval and Renaissance carnival square.

The description continues for several additional lines as more details accumulate. Specific architectural features and Roman neighborhoods are mentioned as the narrator builds a complete picture of the panorama. This all-encompassing vision of Rome, which identifies details while also making a claim to holistic vision, is the apogee of the positive unity-in-fragmentation motif that runs through the story.

Alongside Annunziata, this panorama is also the second potential ideal object of representation to appear in the text. Like Annunziata, the Roman vista arrests the prince's attention: "But here the prince glanced at Rome and stopped." The city, too, is referred to in aesthetic terms, as a "picture": "And along the whole length of the picture towered the light-blue, transparent hills, as light as air, embraced by a kind of phosphorescent light" (277) [И потом во всю длину всей картины возносились и голубели прозрачные горы, легкие, как воздух, объятые каким-то фосфорическим светом] (3:259). And yet, in a sudden and unexpected reversal, the following sentence claims that such beauty is *un*representable by human art: "Neither word nor brush would be able to convey the marvelous harmony and the combination of all the levels of this picture" (277) [Ни словом, ни кистью нельзя было передать чудного согласия и сочетанья всех планов этой картины] (3:259). The assertion that neither the poetic word *nor* the artist's brush can truly capture the Roman cityscape is unexpected in a text that, up until this point, has been optimistic in its belief in the representational powers of both verbal and visual art.

This reversal suggests a crisis in the text's vision of ideal totality. Indeed, the text lapses into silence at precisely this point: the narrative of "Rome" breaks off as the prince stands gazing out at the panorama. We can assume that Gogol's ultimate object in "Rome" was to create a verbal approximation of the rival artist's painting in "The Portrait," i.e., to capture in literary form the "significant moment" of history painting, Gogol's own aesthetic ideal. To achieve this object Gogol would need to find a way of employing a spatializing device, such as the one he uses to represent Annunziata, to capture the Roman cityscape at a particular moment. The exalted idea behind "Rome"—that idea which is to be embodied in literary form and conveyed in full to the reader, just as Briullov's idea is conveyed instantaneously to the viewer of *The Last Day of Pompeii*—is bound up with the ideal of pre-modern collective spirituality the prince discovers in his native city. Recall the narrator's characterization of the magnificent painting in "The Portrait": this painting "was—*a moment*, but that moment for which a man's whole life is but the preparation." The prince's *Bildung*—his aesthetic education as he travels from Italy to Paris and back in an inverse of the usual North-to-South trajectory of the Grand Tour—is the "preparation"; what awaits him upon his return to Rome is the "significant moment" for which he (and through him, the reader) has been prepared. This moment should capture the entirety of Rome, with Annunziata, the text's other instantiation of *polnaia krasota*, harmoniously absorbed into the totalizing view of the city.

However, the narrative falters as the prince reaches the summit of Gianicolo. The text's confidence in the power of the word, so strong when describing Annunziata, diminishes when the Roman panorama becomes the object of representation. The image of the panorama devolves into a list of details (houses, churches, bell towers, palaces, the Pantheon, the Medici villa, and so on) that so overwhelms the prince that all he can do is stare in mute wonderment. Annunziata's total beauty inspires a level of devotion and dedication in the prince that prompts single-minded action (he cannot rest until he finds her), whereas the panorama's fragmented beauty overwhelms him into silence and inactivity as he seeks to follow every avenue, every side street with his eyes.

The prince's inability to see the entirety of the panorama all at once translates into the narrator's inability to describe it: there are simply too many parts to encompass.[152]

While Annunziata successfully embodies the totality of the instantaneous yet eternal moment, the panorama reveals the deficiency of the Romantic concept of unity in fragmentation. Gogol's depiction of Annunziata, with its reliance on an expanding set of layered images to convey a sense of space, communicates to both the prince and the reader a singular and eternal impression of true beauty. This beauty is both spiritual and material, and its power is absolute and monologic. There is no room for doubt or interpretation: once a person has beheld Annunziata, his only choice is to follow her unquestioningly. The panorama, on the other hand, is ever growing and changing. The nature of its beauty will differ depending on the particular fragment the viewer glimpses at any given time. In order to perceive the panorama in its entirety, one must move one's eyes first to one section, then to another, and so on: the overall effect is temporal. There is also no guarantee that any one person's experience of this beauty will resemble another's, as it is up to the individual viewer to engage visually with the fragmented cityscape in a particular way.

For Gogol in 1842, the truer universalizing presence is Annunziata's. Although, like *Moonlight in the broken window…*, the novel *Annunziata* was never completed, the fact that Annunziata's name serves as the title of the larger textual whole of which "Rome" was intended as a part is significant. This hierarchy of completedness—the novel *Annunziata* would encompass and be more complete than the fragment "Rome"—extends to the two objects that the novel and the fragment name: the woman Annunziata and the panorama of Rome. Annunziata's is a more total presence. While it is true that the action of "Rome" is generated by her absence, this absence is promised to be temporary, both by the title of the larger work and by the meaning of Annunziata's own name. "Annunziata" is "Annunciation" – Gabriel's announcement to Mary of the coming Incarnation of God. This name is a promise of coming wholeness and unity, the verbalization of a future totality. While Gogol soon abandoned work on *Annunziata* to focus his novelistic energies exclusively on *Dead Souls*, the promise of the unwritten novel remains immanent in the text of "Rome."

IV. "The Historical Painter Ivanov" and *Dead Souls*: Word vs. Narrative

Given the privileged status accorded to the visual and plastic arts in "Rome" and the fact that Gogol maintained friendships with Roman artists and painters for much of the period that he spent working on the first volume of *Dead Souls*, it is surprising that there are so few references to the visual arts in the novel. Apart from Plyushkin's garden, which is described as "picturesque" in its scenic devastation, most of the allusions to pictures and paintings in *Dead Souls*, Vol. 1 are ironic or banal. These include the bizarre painting of the voluptuous nymph hanging in the town inn, the miniature pictures of birds on Korobochka's walls, and the images of generals adorning the rooms of Sobakevich's house. Unlike "The Portrait" and "Rome," *Dead Souls* appears relatively unconcerned with the theoretical status of the image.

And yet, as we shall see below, the novel retains Gogol's longstanding preoccupation with the conflict between the "significant moment" of painting, so ideal for representing

[152] The prince's awed response to the Roman panorama recalls Kant's notion of the mathematically sublime – that sensation we experience when confronted with "the inadequacy of the greatest effort of our Imagination to estimate the magnitude of an object." See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.H. Bernard (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000), p. 116.

presence, and the comparatively fragmented nature of verbal forms, with their basis in absent referents. The widely recognized tensions (ethical, religious, and structural) that underwrite much of *Dead Souls* stem from Gogol's uncertainty over the ideal form for conveying that spiritually animating and transformative truth, the representation of which he had come to see as the novel's mission. The first volume of *Dead Souls* repeatedly asks whether, in future volumes, this truth will be conveyed somehow instantly, through a single, "all-powerful" word, or gradually, via the expanding narrative of Chichikov's personal salvation. The immediacy and plenitude of this "all-powerful word," or Word (in Gogol's lyrical discourse the term is invested with religious power) recall the status of the visual icon in other Gogolian works. In *Dead Souls*, then, the all-powerful Word comes to possess the spiritually transformative qualities formerly attributed solely to the image; like the image, this Word is taken to stand in contrast to the narrative impulse.

Before we turn to *Dead Souls*, however, it is worth considering the last of Gogol's published works to be explicitly concerned with the visual arts: an essay that Gogol wrote in 1846 in the guise of a letter to the never-identified Count. Matv. Yu. V. The letter was published in *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* [*Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s druz'iami*] (1847) under the title "The Historical Painter Ivanov" [Istoricheskii zhivopisets Ivanov]. This essay, though dated four years after the publication of Vol. 1 of *Dead Souls,* can, I argue, be read as a development of the same tensions that underwrite the novel, here framed as a discussion of Alexander Ivanov's history painting *The Appearance of Christ Before the People* [*Iavlenie Khrista narodu*]. Gogol's analysis of the painting and especially of Ivanov's creative process inscribe his own hopes for the completed trilogy of *Dead Souls* and his experience working on the first two volumes. The fact that in 1846 Gogol again turned to painting as a meta-discourse for thinking about ideal artistic creation suggests that his conceptualization of the text/image dichotomy continued to occupy a significant place in his aesthetic thought throughout the 1840s as he was working on his *magnum opus*.

Unlike Gogol's essay on Briullov's *The Last Day of Pompeii*, "The Historical Painter Ivanov" foregrounds the artist's personal circumstances during the composition of *The Appearance of Christ*, in particular his poverty and isolation. The text contains a number of descriptive passages lamenting Ivanov's beggarly status and proclaiming the painter's decision to forsake all worldly needs in pursuit of his great creation. These descriptions recall the plot of "The Portrait" while also clearly intending to evoke Gogol's own circumstances in the 1840s. Later in the letter Gogol writes, "I have experienced just about the same condition, I have experienced it in my own body"[153] [я испробовал почти то же состояние, испробовал его на собственном теле] (8:335). The fact that the characterization of Ivanov's artistic process so closely mirrors that of Chertkov's rival in "The Portrait"—like the rival, Ivanov lives in exile isolated from family and friends; he has barely enough food to survive; he has devoted himself to a long, laborious process in order to finally produce his masterpiece, a large-scale history painting on a sacred theme—reveals how little Gogol's conception of the ideal artist had changed between 1835 and 1846. What had changed, however, was the extent to which Gogol felt compelled to identify himself outright with this artistic process. While neither "The Portrait" nor "The Last Day of Pompeii" makes the analogy to Gogol's own writing explicit, in "The Historical Painter Ivanov" Gogol asserts that he has experienced the same spiritual and material

[153] Translation by Jesse Zeldin, *Nikolai Gogol. Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt U. Press, 1969), p. 154. Subsequent citations to this translation of *Selected Passages* will appear parenthetically in the text by page number.

sufferings as Ivanov while writing *Dead Souls*. A direct correlation is thus established between Ivanov's *Appearance of Christ* and Gogol's tripartite novel.

Importantly, what Gogol finds most worthy of praise in Ivanov's painting is that same "significant moment" that we observed in the Briullov essay and in the description of the rival's painting in "The Portrait." Here the sacred status of the "moment" is exalted even further, as can be seen in the following description of Ivanov's *The Appearance of Christ*:

> At that very moment that everything is moving with such varied motions, in the distance the very One in Whose name the baptism has just been accomplished appears—and this is the moment of the picture. The Precursor is seized just at that instant that, indicating the Savior with his finger, he is pronouncing: 'Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sin of the world.' And the whole crowd, without losing the expressions on their faces, turns in look or thought towards Him Whom the prophet has indicated. Along with the first impressions, which have not had time to vanish from their faces, new impressions run all across their faces. The faces of the most elect are illumined by a lovely light, while others are still seeking to penetrate the sense of the incomprehensible words […]. (149)
>
> В это самое время, когда все движется такими различными движеньями, показывается вдали тот самый, во имя которого уже совершилось крещение, – и здесь настоящая минута картины. Предтеча взят именно в тот миг, когда, указавши на спасителя перстом, произносит: "Се агнец, взъемляй грехи мира!" И вся толпа, не оставляя выражений лиц своих, устремляется или глазом, или мыслию к тому, на которого указал пророк. Сверх прежних, не успевших сбежать с лиц, впечатлений, пробегают по всем лицам новые впечатления. Чудным светом осветились лица передовых избранных, тогда как другие стараются еще войти в смысл непонятных слов […]. (8:330)

The entire passage is underwritten by a tension between motion and stillness: between the narrative flow of the action that precedes and follows the moment of representation, and the overwhelming significance attributed to this singular moment, when Christ appears before the waiting crowd. The passage consistently emphasizes the instantaneousness of this event: "At that very moment," "the moment of the picture," "just at that instant." These phrases which express the immediate, the momentary, are juxtaposed with the larger narrative description of the moment's context.

Consider the contradiction in the first sentence: "At that very moment that everything is moving with such varied motions…". Stasis ("At that very moment") and movement ("everything is moving") are placed in direct tension with one another: it is the triumph of Ivanov's painting that it captures precisely this moment, the interruption of ongoing activity by the sudden appearance of Christ. Later in the essay, Gogol states that the painting depicts "the course of man's conversion to Christ" (149) [весь этот ход *обращения человека ко Христу*!] (8:330), and that its goal is "with [a] brush to depict the conversion of man to Christ" (152) [изобразить кистью обращение человека ко Христу] (8:332). Conversion, *obrashchen'e*, is by definition a process, the alteration from one state of being to another. And yet there is presumably some moment in that process when the conversion *has just been accomplished*; the

precise instant when the new disciple crosses the threshold from forsaken to redeemed. This is the moment that Ivanov's painting represents, and which, we are led to believe, his work has the power to effect in the viewer. The painting thus captures both a *moment* and a *movement*: the entire movement of religious conversion expressed in a single, "significant" moment.

Even more telling than Gogol's description of Ivanov's painting, however, is his account of the artist's creative process. Multiple pages of the essay are devoted to an elaboration of how slowly and laboriously Ivanov has worked and how much careful study has gone into preparing for the painting, both spiritually and in mastering the necessary techniques. There is a tension here, too, between the slowness and difficulty of Ivanov's personal conversion and mental preparation in undertaking his artistic task, and the immediate present-ness of the moment that his painting depicts. Ivanov has devoted himself to his work "as the monk to the monastery" [как монах монастырю] and has spent more than ten years striving to attain the spiritual state necessary to "fulfill his inner thought": "Ivanov prayed God to grant him such a complete conversion; he wept tears in silence, begging Him for the strength to fulfill his inner thought" (150) [Иванов молил бога о ниспослании ему такого полного обращенья, лил слезы в тишине, прося у него же сил исполнить им же внушенную мысль] (8:331). And yet his painting gives no indication of this long labor, instead impressing its lofty idea instantly upon the viewer. Is spiritual transformation, then, a laborious process or a sudden benediction? Is this transformation best conveyed in the form of a narrative, or as a single significant moment? These are the questions that loom in the background of "The Historical Painter Ivanov," and in the structural tensions of *Dead Souls*, to which we now turn.

By "structural tensions" I have in mind first and foremost the famous digressions, both lyrical and ironic-comedic, which are in perpetual conflict with the picaresque adventure plot. These digressions have often been compared to the digressive asides in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, direct addresses to the reader which are deeply rooted in the tradition of Byron and romantic irony. The digressions in *Dead Souls*, however, are more disruptive than those that appear in *Eugene Onegin*—largely because they exist in such clear structural opposition to the novel's predominant motif, that of the road. In its depiction of Chichikov's journey through rural Russia, *Dead Souls* owes much to the genres of the travel novel and the picaresque adventure tale, both of which rely on a forward-moving, dynamic temporality that is inscribed into the guiding image of the road or the journey. In *Dead Souls*, this dynamic momentum is constantly interrupted and suspended by a competing tendency toward digression, what Gippius refers to as the novel's "laws of retardation."[154]

The result is a constant alternation between static and dynamic modes. It is this alternation that I propose to read within the context of Gogol's longstanding preoccupation with the conflict between spatial image and temporal text, a conflict which, as we have seen in the Ivanov essay, in the 1840s expanded into a more general conflict between the momentary and the processual, especially as this conflict relates to the event of spiritual transfiguration.

While *Dead Souls* famously began as a minor humorous anecdote related to Gogol by Pushkin, the finished novel takes spiritual transfiguration as its primary aim. Clues within the text itself, particularly in the lengthy lyrical digressions in the novel's second half, as well as comments Gogol made in letters and conversations regarding *Dead Souls*, reveal that Volumes

[154] Gippius writes of *Dead Souls*, "the narrative is subject to the 'laws of retardation.' The purposes of retardation are served not only by the interpolation of highly rhetorical passages, but also by the extended comparisons in rhythmic prose (the ball is compared to flies on sugar, Nozdryov to a lieutenant on the attack, etc.)." See Gippius, *Gogol'*, p. 119.

Two and Three were intended to bring about the spiritual transformation of Chichikov, the reader, and ultimately the Russian nation. The digression that closes the first volume of the novel, and which concludes with the well-known image of Russia as bird-troika [птица тройка], makes explicit an analogy that develops over the course of the novel. According to this analogy, the bumbling confusion and ineptitude of Chichikov, the landowners, and the townsfolk reflects the spiritual confusion and ineptitude of the Russian people:

> …certain ardent patriots, who for the moment are quietly occupied with some sort of philosophy or with augmentations at the expense of their dearly beloved fatherland, and think not about not doing wrong, but only about having no one say they are doing wrong. But no, neither patriotism nor primal feeling is the cause of these accusations, something else is hidden behind them. Why conceal the word? Who, then, if not an author, must speak the sacred truth? You fear the deeply penetrating gaze, you are afraid to penetrate anything deeply with your own gaze, you like to skim over everything with unthinking eyes. You will even have a hearty laugh over Chichikov, will perhaps even praise the author, saying: 'He did cleverly catch a thing or two, though; must be a man of merry temperament!' And after these words you will turn to yourself with redoubled pride, a self-satisfied smile will appear on your face, and you will add: 'One can't help agreeing, the most strange and ridiculous people turn up in some provinces, and no small scoundrels at that!' And who amongst you, filled with Christian humility, not publicly, but in quiet, alone, in moments of solitary converse with himself, will point deeply into his own soul this painful question: 'And isn't there a bit of Chichikov in me, too?' Perish the thought![155]

> …со стороны некоторых горячих патриотов, до времени покойно занимающихся какой-нибудь философией или приращениями на счет сумм нежно любимого ими отечества, думающих не о том, чтобы не делать дурного, а о том, чтобы только не говорили, что они делают дурное. Но нет, не патриотизм и не первое чувство суть причины обвинений, другое скрывается под ними. К чему таить слово? Кто же, как не автор, должен сказать святую правду? Вы боитесь глубоко-устремленного взора, вы страшитесь сами устремить на что-нибудь глубокий взор, вы любите скользнуть по всему недумающими глазами. Вы посмеетесь даже от души над Чичиковым, может быть, даже похвалите автора, скажете: "Однако ж кое-что он ловко подметил, должен быть веселого нрава человек!". И после таких слов с удвоившеюся гордостию обратитесь к себе, самодовольная улыбка покажется на лице вашем, и вы прибавите: "А ведь должно согласиться, престранные и пресмешные бывают люди в некоторых провинциях, да и подлецы притом немалые!" А кто из вас, полный христианского смиренья, не гласно, а в тишине, один, в минуты уединенных бесед с самим собой, углубит во внутрь собственной души сей тяжелый запрос: "А нет ли и во мне какой-нибудь части Чичикова?" Да, как бы не так! (6:245)

[155] Pevear and Volokhonsky, p. 251.

The passage, though periodically deflated by the bickering between Chichikov and his coachman Selifan, develops an image of "Rus'" as a fantastic troika hurtling towards a mysterious, divinely inspired future. The nation's spiritual destiny becomes intertwined with the spiritual future of the hero, Chichikov, as well as that of the author, who is tasked with uttering "the sacred truth" [святая правда]. This sacred truth will be revealed in the subsequent two volumes, which are figured a few lines later as a continuation of the road the troika is following: "…but as for the author, he must in no case quarrel with his hero: they still have many a road to travel together hand in hand; two big parts lie ahead—no trifling matter" (251) […но что до автора, то он ни в каком случае не должен ссориться с своим героем: еще не мало пути и дороги придется им пройти вдвоем рука в руке; две большие части впереди—это не безделица] (6:245-246).This passage is a culmination of the novel's broader tendency to equate the author's creative task with a long journey he shares with his hero.[156]

Thus the guiding motif of the journey which unifies *Dead Souls* simultaneously inscribes the novel's formal structure (i.e., its reliance on the forms of the travel novel and the adventure tale); the lofty spiritual mission the text has set for itself; the author's creative task; and the psychological development of the hero, whose future spiritual and psychological complexity is promised both by direct statements from the author and by our increased access to Chichikov's inner life in Vol. 2.[157] And yet the road motif, which signals narrativity, process, and gradual change, repeatedly comes up against the novel's other key motif, that of the Word.

Perhaps the most famous passage concerning the significance of the all-powerful Word in *Dead Souls* comes at the end of Chapter 5, in the digression prompted by a passing muzhik's description of Plyushkin. The muzhik's "aptly spoken Russian word" [метко сказанное русское слово], which keeps Chichikov chuckling for several miles, is invested with great significance. Though the word itself, we are told, is comical and even vulgar ("not usable in polite conversation" [не употребительное в светском разговоре]), it comes to stand in for the semi-mystical power of the *spoken* (as opposed to written) Russian language, which generates a fully-formed image instantly upon its utterance. Once this word has been uttered, the narrator tells us, there is no need for elaboration, as the signified object is made immediately and palpably present to the listener. In the case of the vulgar adjective, such as the one bestowed upon Plyushkin by the contemptuous muzhik, "there is no point in adding later what sort of nose or lips you have—in one line you are portrayed from head to foot!" (108) [ничего прибавлять уже потом, какой у тебя нос или губы—одной чертой обрисован ты с ног до головы!] (6:109). The example of granting insulting epithets is humorous and prosaic, and yet—as so often in Gogol—the implications of this ironic passage are significant. The idea of a single word so meaningful, so aptly chosen, and so invested with signifying power that it is able to paint the whole portrait of a

[156] See the digressions in Chapters 7, 10, and 11.

[157] Towards the end of Vol. 1 the narrator predicts Chichikov's future renewal: "And it may be that in this same Chichikov the passion that drives him comes not from him, and that his cold existence contains that which will later throw man down in the dust and make him kneel before the wisdom of the heavens. And it is still a mystery why this image has appeared in the poem that is presently coming into being" (248) [И, может быть, в сем же самом Чичикове страсть, его влекущая, уже не от него, и в холодном его существовании заключено то, что потом повергнет в прах и на колени человека пред мудростью небес. И еще тайна, почему сей образ предстал в ныне являющейся на свет поэме] (6:242). In general, the second volume presents Chichikov as somewhat more prone to reflection and capable of positive change than he appears in the first volume (this is especially true of the remaining fragment of the "late chapter" of Vol. 2, possibly the final chapter of the novel). Gippius, in particular, has read this development as an indication of Gogol's commitment to psychological realism in the later volumes. See Gippius, *Gogol'*, pp. 168-169.

man in an instant, recalls Gogol's faith in the representational capacity of the image and indicates his desire for a verbal form capable of achieving the same instantaneous effect. Like visual art objects in Gogol's other writings, here the aptly chosen word appears as a material thing, a concrete presence: "an axe cannot destroy it" [не вырубливается топором]. Writing's inability to effect the same sort of presence is underscored by the passage's omission of the word itself: we are never told what the actual epithet is.

This longing for the all-powerful Word, a Word that is to be spoken rather than written and which possesses the image's capacity to create and transform instantaneously, is echoed in subsequent chapters of *Dead Souls*. The digression that opens Chapter 7, one of the novel's most sustained excursuses on the writer-as-traveler analogy, unexpectedly concludes by proclaiming that the writer's journey will end with the transformation of his creative energies into a different form altogether: "And still far off is the time when, in a different key, a fearsome tempest of inspiration will rise from a head wreathed in sacred awe and radiance, and in confused trepidation will be heard the majestic thunder of a different speech…" (135) [И далеко еще то время, когда иным ключом грозная вьюга вдохновенья подымется из облеченной в святый ужас и в блистанье главы, и почуют в смущенном трепете величавый гром других речей…] (6:134-135). This "different speech" will be spoken, not written; it will thunder from the heavens in a moment of sudden inspiration, just as God speaks in thunder from Mount Sinai in Exodus. This is the Word, the "sacred truth" that Gogol longs to find and express in the later volumes of *Dead Souls*. The conflict inherent in this longing is clear: how can such a Word, which is spoken aloud in a single instant, be rendered in a narrative that is written and which, moreover, is organized around the motif of the road, a form that inscribes temporal progression? I argue that this conflict is a further iteration of the conflict between image and text that animates stories like "The Portrait" and "Rome." It drives the formal tension between movement and stasis that underlies *Dead Souls* and remains unresolved in both the first novel and the incomplete second volume.

However, some indication of what this resolution—of movement and stasis, of gradual progress and sudden transformation—may have looked like, had the final volumes been achieved as Gogol intended, finds expression in Chapter 11. Speaking of the future volumes of *Dead Souls*, the author states,

> but…perhaps in this same story some other, as yet untouched strings will be felt, the inestimable wealth of the Russian spirit will step forth, a man endowed with divine valor will pass by, or some wondrous Russian maiden such as can be found nowhere in the world, with all the marvelous beauty of a woman's soul, all magnanimous aspiration and self-denial. And all virtuous people of other tribes will seem dead next to them, as a book is dead next to the living word!" (228)
>
> Но…может быть, в сей же самой повести почуются иные, еще доселе небранные струны, предстанет несметное богатство русского духа, пройдет муж, одаренный божескими доблестями, или чудная русская девица, какой не сыскать нигде в мире, со всей дивной красотой женской души, вся из великодушного стремления и самоотвержения. И мертвыми покажутся пред ними все добродетельные люди других племен, как мертва книга пред живым словом! (6:223)

The reference to "untouched strings" [небранные струны], suggests a departure from Gogol's habitual preference for the visual over the musical arts as a metaliterary stand-in for his own writing. We will return to this unexpected musical motif below. What is most striking in this passage, however, is the final line, which reasserts the primacy of the "living word" over the written text, and which claims that *Dead Souls* will ultimately produce figures so divine that they attain the status of the living word, thereby transcending their written novelistic form. Somehow, then, in the future volumes of *Dead Souls* the living Word will take on the flesh of characters who are as idealized as the characters of Vol. 1 are detestable; their form will convey spiritual presence as surely as the landowners and townspeople of N— embody absence. These figures will "step forth" suddenly along the hero's path; their presence will effect a gradual accumulation of transformative moments, culminating in Chichikov's (and the reader's, and Russia's) spiritual renewal.

The reference to a perfectly beautiful and divine Russian woman in the above passage recalls Gogol's attempt to represent such a woman in Annunziata. Unlike the "man endowed with divine valor,"[158] the image also finds resonance in two characters who appear in the extant volumes of *Dead Souls*: the governor's daughter, whom Chichikov first encounters on the road following a mishap with their carriages in Vol. 1; and Ulinka, the beautiful woman beloved by Tentetnikov in Vol. 2. It is in these female figures—particularly Ulinka, a close spiritual cousin of Annunziata—that we are able to recognize traces of Gogol's attempt to realize the longed-for embodiment of the living Word. Artistically, the results are not successful—neither the governor's daughter nor Ulinka makes a particularly strong impression on the reader's imagination—and yet, the way in which Gogol characterizes these two women reveals something about his plan to embody, in writing, the ideal figures of the later volumes.

What unites Ulinka and the governor's daughter—the latter of whom is less developed and idealized than her double in Vol. 2, but who nevertheless possesses something of Gogol's feminine ideal, which reaches its highest expression in Annunziata—is Gogol's reliance on the language of the visual in their portrayal, as well as the by now familiar immediacy with which both women's beauty is said to strike the viewer. In the fifth chapter of Vol. 1, the governor's daughter disappears in her carriage as quickly as she had appeared, "like something resembling a vision, and what remained was again the road, the britzka, the troika of horses familiar to the reader, Selifan, Chichikov, the flatness and emptiness of the surrounding fields" (91) [как что-то похожее на виденье, и опять осталась дорога, бричка, тройка знакомых читателю лошадей, Селифан, Чичиков, гладь и пустота окрестных полей] (6:92). She is a "vision," *viden'e*; the effect she has on Chichikov—and on the narrator, who ultimately proves more susceptible to her charms than his hero—is entirely optic. Her beauty is also a momentary apparition, something like the sudden lightning bolt of Annunziata's appearance; and yet we are told that the effect of this beauty impresses itself indelibly on the heart of the viewer: "Wherever in life it may be…a man will at least once meet with a phenomenon which is unlike anything he has happened to see before, which for once at least awakens in him a feeling unlike those he is fated to feel all his life" (91) [Везде, где бы ни было в жизни…везде хоть раз встретится на пути человеку явленье, не похожее на всё то, что случалось ему видеть дотоле, которое хоть раз

[158] An argument could be made that Tentetnikov, Kostanzhoglo, and Murazov represent early sketches of this unambiguously positive man—indeed, Richard Peace asserts that the figure of Tentetnikov is the most positive element of Vol. 2—and yet all three, particularly Kostanzhoglo, are ultimately closer to caricatures of goodness and valor than genuine representations of those traits. See Peace, *The Enigma of Gogol: An Examination of the Writings of N.V. Gogol and their Place in the Russian Literary Tradition* (Cambridge UP, 1982), pp. 246-247.

пробудит в нем чувство, не похожее на те, которые суждено ему чувствовать всю жизнь] (6:92). Significantly, this unprecedented vision strikes the journeyman "along the road" [на пути], interrupting the straightforward progression of his life. It is a static moment of pure presence, a single "significant moment" within the context of a largely insignificant existence. In this case, the feelings awakened by such an apparition are revealed to be temporary and fleeting; it will take a purer and more perfect expression of feminine beauty to embody a more permanent presence.

This more perfect female presence is to be found in Ulinka, General Betrishchev's daughter, whom Chichikov encounters in Vol. 2. Like the governor's daughter in Vol. 1, Ulinka is described as a "vision": "…a strange, incomparable being, who could be regarded more as some fantastic vision than as a woman" (275) […существо невиданное, странное, которую скорей можно было почесть каким-то фантастическим видением, чем женщиной] (7:145). The description of Ulinka as a beautiful apparition extends further than the earlier description of the governor's daughter, however. In his treatment of Ulinka, Gogol returns to the language of painting and sculpture that was so markedly absent from the first volume of *Dead Souls*.

In the few short passages of the unfinished novel that concern Ulinka, the narrator compares her alternately to an antique cameo, a painting, and a marble sculpture. The paragraph that introduces Ulinka describes her beauty in the same terms that characterize the beauty of Annunziata, namely, as an embodied competition between art and life: "It is extraordinarily difficult to paint her portrait. This was something as alive as life itself" (275) [Необыкновенно трудно изобразить портрет ее. Это было что-то живое, как сама жизнь] (7:145). And yet Tentetnikov, stricken by love, finds himself compelled to draw Ulinka's portrait in his notebooks, and is amazed to discover that her image emerges faithfully on the page, as full of life as the original. Like Annunziata, Ulinka is caught somewhere between a work of art and the pure presence of life, as much a lifelike painting as she is a statuesque living woman. Like Annunziata's, her beauty also has the effect of a sudden burst of light, as we see when she is first introduced to Chichikov:

> On the other side of the open door, her wonderful hand grasping the door handle, a live little figure appeared. If a transparent painting, lit from behind, were suddenly to shine in a dark room, it would not be so striking as this little figure radiant with life appearing as if in order to light up the room. It seemed as though along with her a ray of sunlight flew into the room, suddenly illumining its ceiling, its moldings, and its dark corners. (293)
>
> На обратной половине растворенной двери, ухватившись чудесной рукой за ручку двери, явилась живая фигурка. Если бы в темной комнате вдруг вспыхнула прозрачная картина, освещенная сзади лампою, она бы не поразила так, как эта сиявшая жизнью фигурка, которая точно предстала затем, чтобы осветить комнату. Казалось, как бы вместе с нею влетел солнечный луч в комнату, озаривши вдруг потолок, карниз и темные углы ее. (7:163)

Ulinka's presence illuminates the room "suddenly," *vdrug*; she appears as a ray of sunlight (a metaphor also used to describe Annunziata) or as a painting suddenly shining in the darkness of an unlit room. The fusion between total lifelikeness and perfect artistry that distinguishes both

women is particularly marked in this passage. The light that radiates from Ulinka is simultaneously a natural ray of sunshine and an illuminated painting; she is a work of art but also a human figure "radiant with life" [сиявшая жизнью]. Thus, Ulinka's appearance is marked by all the characteristics of one of Gogol's ideal aesthetic objects: her power derives from the realm of the visual, and is thus material and concrete, entirely present; she represents a perfect union between art and life; and the effect that she has on anyone who beholds her is immediate and totalizing.

Indeed, Ulinka was to be the inspiration behind Tentetnikov's future spiritual transformation. More than the governor's daughter of Vol. 1, she was intended as an image of redemptive beauty, a sort of living icon. That Gogol, so preoccupied with the Word in the first volume of *Dead Souls*, again turns to painting and the visual arts in the second volume as a means of expressing ideal and transformative beauty, speaks to his inability to discover that verbal form he so longed for, a form that would capture the momentary, static, and instantaneous aspect of spiritual transfiguration. Vol. 2 relies extensively on the language of the visual. For instance, while the word "picturesque" hardly ever appears in Vol. 1, it is used repeatedly to describe the landscapes and natural scenery of Vol. 2.

Significantly, however, this apparent return to the visual arts as a source for new metaliterary devices to inscribe Gogol's own writing is challenged by a series of references to music and song in the second volume. The most notable example is the song that the rowers sing one evening on Petukh's estate, a song that "poured forth as boundlessly as all Rus'" (312) [разливалась беспредельная, как Русь, песня] (7:182-183). The rowers' song immediately recalls the glorious national song sung by the coachman of the bird troika in the concluding lines of Vol. 1, the song that inspires the troika's fervent movement, that "familiar song from above" [с вышины знакомую песню]. This song is what drives the horses that bear the Russian nation forward; it is also the metaphor that closes the novel, to be picked up again in the subsequent volume in the evening song of the rowers. Music, then, is given a privileged place in the later portions of *Dead Souls*. In some respects, the art of music comes to vie with the visual arts as the preferred metaphor for Gogol's own art. This is perhaps unsurprising when we consider how closely song is linked to the idea of the spoken or voiced word, a concept which, as we have seen, takes on great significance over the course of *Dead Souls*. Music also allows for the possibility of temporal movement without narrative: since it does not require referential content it can develop as pure form.

Gogol's reliance on painterly and visual language in his descriptions of the governor's daughter and Ulinka suggests that, unable to find the sought-after Word, Gogol considered returning to the discourse of the visual arts as a means for representing ideal presence. This possibility is supported by his focus on the visual in the 1846 Ivanov essay. At the same time, the valorization of the spoken, audible Word in Vol. 1, as well as the symbolically significant references to a national song in both volumes, suggest that Gogol was experimenting with music as a metaliterary device, one which may have acquired a more central role as the volumes of *Dead Souls* progressed.

V. Conclusion

Investigating three of Gogol's fictional narratives—"The Portrait," "Rome," and *Dead Souls*—for traces of that evasive *to*, the positive presence usually held to be missing from Gogol's artistic universe, this chapter has identified key moments in these texts that either

partially realize presence or gesture toward what Gogolian presence might look like. These include, first, an experimental mode of literary description in "The Portrait" that recalls the Baroque visual emblem. This "emblematic" approach to description guides the story's moonlit temptation scene, which approximates a Baroque chiaroscuro tableau depicting the allegorical meeting of demon and artist as well as a metaphorical confrontation between painting and literary narrative. The title of the cycle of *Künstlerromane* for which "The Portrait" was first written was "*Moonlight in the broken window of an attic on Vasilievskii Island*." This planned title suggests that the image of moonlight shining through the artist's window may have functioned as a unifying emblem in the unrealized anthology. Repeated imagery and image patterns are one way in which literary discourse spatializes narrative and arrests temporal flow: this unifying emblem, then, itself reliant on the painterly technique of chiaroscuro, would have allowed Gogol to claim some of the affordances of visual art for his own literary cycle.

However, the primary instance of positive presence in "The Portrait" is not represented, only alluded to. This is the rival artist's painting, identifiable as a largescale history painting akin to Briullov's *The Last Day of Pompeii*. Reading the description of this painting in "The Portrait" alongside Gogol's essay on Briullov, I identify the "significant moment" of history painting as Gogol's absolute aesthetic ideal. While the literary fragment or arabesque can only gesture toward an absent ideal whole, the visual moment (*mgnovenie*) captured in history painting already contains the whole within itself. The entirety of an exalted historical or biblical narrative is condensed into the painter's chosen moment: both the preceding and subsequent events of the narrative are implied in that single "significant" instant.

While "The Portrait" is unable to find a literary language capable of approximating the absolute beauty of the rival's painting, and the *Moonlight* cycle was left unrealized, "Rome" comes closer to offering a positive vision of narrative imbued with the spatializing capacity of the visual arts. The story conveys an image of "true beauty" [полная красота] in the figure of Annunziata by creating a descriptive language that throws the narrative into stasis the moment she appears. In place of a sequential, "realist" description of Annunziata's physical traits, Gogol represents his feminine ideal through a series of verbal "paintings" that gradually accumulate in the reader's mind, recalling Diderot's "small acts of the imagination." The result is again a spatialization of narrative as Gogol claims the stable iconicity of the visual for his own literary art. However, the story's faith in its ability to embody positive presence falters when the prince encounters the Roman panorama, which consists of too many distinct fragments to capture in verbal representation: at this point, the text lapses into silence. "Rome" too falls short of achieving the longed-for "significant moment" in literary narrative; but the experimental strategies Gogol devises to portray Annunziata point toward a future form which might be capable of rendering this aesthetic ideal in narrative art.

Finally, I argue that Gogol's desire to locate a literary form capable of approximating the "significant moment" of history painting motivates textual tensions and idiosyncrasies within *Dead Souls*. Gogol's essay "The Historical Painter Ivanov" suggests that by the 1840s Gogol's longstanding fixation on the contrast between (spatial) image and (temporal) narrative had expanded into a preoccupation with the question of whether spiritual conversion is instantaneous or processual. Large-scale history paintings like Ivanov's *Appearance of Christ Before the People* remained Gogol's aesthetic ideal, and now seemed to hold the key to representing and

even prompting within the viewer the epiphanic moment of spiritual transfiguration.[159] In *Dead Souls* the road motif, which propels the narrative forward and inscribes temporal progress, repeatedly comes up against the motif of the all-powerful Word. I argue that the Word inscribes an alternative temporality which Gogol typically associated with the image, possessing as it does the image's capacity to transform and reveal truth instantaneously. The conflict between text and image that animates "The Portrait" and "Rome" is thus transmuted in *Dead Souls* into a tension between movement and stasis – between spiritual transformation as process vs. spiritual transformation as epiphany. This tension drives the formal structure of *Dead Souls* and remains unresolved in the extant chapters of the second volume.

In the final analysis, then, most of these instances of positive presence remain aspirational rather than achieved. "The Portrait" shies away from describing the rival artist's magnificent history painting, focusing instead on the profane portrait of Petromikhali; *Moonlight through a broken window* was left unrealized. "Rome" breaks off on the summit of Gianicolo, leaving *Annunziata*, too, unfinished. Gogol burned the second and third volumes of *Dead Souls*, and the extant novel is so far from constructing a meaningful hero's *Bildung* that Chichikov's intended spiritual renewal strikes the reader as absurd. Even when presence is achieved in these texts it cannot be sustained: Annunziata disappears from "Rome," and the spatializing devices Gogol uses to embody her in the narrative are not sufficient to capture the Roman panorama.

What remains is a series of unique literary experiments in claiming the affordances of the visual arts, especially history painting, for narrative. These experiments are often artistically compelling, and they suggest alternative literary forms that might have been realized had Gogol's creative career continued instead of breaking off in the mid-1840s. They also reveal that, despite contemporary readers' tendency to celebrate the fundamental absence at the heart of Gogol's artistic universe—the famous Gogolian *ne to*—from the mid-1830s on Gogol himself was motivated by the need to find an alternative to negative theology and the Romantic fragment. He was preoccupied by a concern characteristic of his status as a *late* Romantic: Once the fragment and other forms for representing absence have been exhausted as meaningful aesthetic strategies, what alternative creative paths might the writer follow? If Gogol fails as a writer of presence, then he is perhaps best understood as a writer of absence's *late style*. Far from rejoicing in the open-ended artistic potentialities of absence, late Romantic texts like "The Portrait," "Rome," and *Dead Souls* construct elaborate literary experiments that seek refuge from absence in older forms borrowed from the visual arts.

[159] Gogol's own longed-for moment of divine revelation was destined to be realized only within the confines of Ivanov's painting, where Gogol—a personal friend of Ivanov who modeled for the painter in Rome—himself appears as a member of the crowd that beholds Christ.

CHAPTER THREE

Embodying the Tragic Hero in Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*

I. Introduction

Lermontov arrived at the final form of *A Hero of Our Time* [*Geroi nashego vremeni*] (1840) only gradually, following multiple attempts to embody his imagined hero in other texts. These include both the unfinished novel *Princess Ligovskaia* [*Kniaginia Ligovskaia*] (1836-37) and the plays he wrote in the 1830s, particularly *Masquerade* [*Maskarad*] (first version completed 1835) and *Two Brothers* [*Dva brata*] (1836). This is to say nothing of the fact that many of the novel's component parts ("Bela," "The Fatalist," and "Taman") were originally published as standalone narratives, and that the stories underwent several reconfigurations before Lermontov settled on the novel's final order: "Bela," "Maxim Maximych," ("Foreword to Pechorin's Journal" [Predislovie k 'Zhurnalu Pechorina']), "Taman," "Princess Mary" [Kniazhnia Meri], "The Fatalist."[160] For Lermontov, finding the right genre and literary form for his hero was an arduous process. Ultimately, he abandoned both the proto-realist narration of *Princess Ligovskaia*—with its more "objective," less Romantic-demonic characterization of Pechorin[161]—and the dramatic mode of the plays, in which the demonic and tragic elements are heightened in the portrayal of Arbenin (*Masquerade*) and Aleksandr Radin (*Two Brothers*), both direct predecessors of Pechorin. These texts gave way in 1840 to the puzzling, disjointed composition of *A Hero of Our Time*. While it is standard practice to read the novel's fragmentary mixed-genre form as an example of the Romantic collection of tales serving as a transitional link between the short story and the novel[162], I propose to read the text instead as an experiment in negotiating between the forms of dramatic performance and literary narrative in order to work out an original representation of selfhood.

It will be the goal of this chapter to examine Lermontov's appeals to theater and dramatic performance in creating the experimental prose form of *A Hero of Our Time*. Lermontov's utilization of dramatic principles to depict the Pechorin of *Hero* is already evident in the markedly different ways in which this Pechorin and the Pechorin of *Princess Ligovskaia* (nicknamed Georges) are introduced in their respective narratives. The 1836 Pechorin appears in the narrative of *Princess Ligovskaia* almost immediately: his arrival in the text is prosaic and

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[160] For a detailed discussion of the novel's publication history, see Robert Reid, *Lermontov's A Hero of Our Time* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1998), pp. 1-2.

[161] The description of Pechorin in *Princess Ligovskaia* has little in common with the dashing hero of Lermontov's finished novel. Georges possesses "not at all attractive" looks ("к несчастию вовсе не привлекательную [наружность]"), lazy movements, and a dark, irregular face. The only elements of this Pechorin's appearance that are retained in *A Hero of Our Time* are the insinuating smile and shining eyes: "…there is something in his smile, in his strangely shining eyes…" […в его улыбке, в его странно блестящих глазах есть что-то…]. See M.Iu. Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh* (Moscow and Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1961-1962), Vol. 4, p. 167. Subsequent citations to this *Sobranie sochinenii* will appear parenthetically in the text by volume and page number. Unless otherwise specified, all translations from *Princess Ligovskaia* are my own.

[162] For example, Victoria Somoff reads the prose cycle of *A Hero of Our Time*, like Pushkin's *Tales of Belkin*, Odoevskii's *Russian Nights* and *Motley Tales*, and Gogol's *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, as "a circuitous route toward the longer form narrative" and true novelistic discourse. See Somoff, *The Imperative of Reliability*, p. 3. The tendency to read the prose cycles of the 1830s as laboratories for novelistic discourse originates with the Russian Formalists.

straightforward. It draws on established prose styles of the 1830s, for instance by introducing Pechorin at the beginning of the narrative using a familiar device that gives the impression of the hero's real existence outside the world of the novel: "Now that he has taken off his overcoat, covered in snow, and entered his office, we can follow after him freely and describe his appearance" [Теперь, когда он снял шинель, закиданную снегом, и взошел в свой кабинет, мы свободно можем пойти за ним и описать его наружность] (4:166-167). This introduction claims to give an objective account of Pechorin's appearance at the moment he is entering his office, which affords the narrator's fly-on-the-wall gaze an opportunity to linger on his form and physiognomy.[163]

Pechorin's appearance in the "Maxim Maximych" narrative of the 1840 novel, by contrast, is largely *theatrical*. The titular hero arrives on the scene a third of the way through the novel, only after his appearance has been built up over the preceding pages by Maxim Maximych's stirring tale of Bela. In other words, the stage has been carefully set for Pechorin's arrival. The man himself first appears "at the end of the square" [на конце площади показался тот, которого мы ожидали] and slowly draws closer to the narrator, as if gradually moving from an upstage wing to center stage.[164] The suspense that surrounds Pechorin's entrance is heightened by the narrator's (and our) uncertainty that Maxim Maximych will arrive in time to meet his old friend: "The horses were already harnessed. There was an occasional tinkle from the bell under the bow of the harness-frame. Twice Pechorin's servant came up to announce that all was ready, and still there was no sign of Maxim Maximych" (49) [Лошади были уже заложены; колокольчик по временам звенел под дугою, и лакей уже два раза подходил к Печорину с докладом, что все готово, а Максим Максимыч еще не являлся] (4:333). A great deal of tension surrounds Pechorin's first appearance in the novel, rendering the scene inherently dramatic. Moreover, the narrator's role in this scene is almost entirely that of a passive observer: his interference in the action is limited to a brief suggestion to Pechorin that he wait a few additional minutes for Maxim Maximych's arrival. The narrator then becomes the audience for the dramatic encounter between Pechorin and the old staff captain, which plays out on the town square as though playing out on a stage. Through our natural identification with the narrator's point of view, we as readers are likewise positioned as audience members watching the tense scene unfold.

The reunion between Pechorin and Maxim Maximych could easily be rewritten as a scene for a stage drama. In addition to the suspense surrounding the encounter, this episode is inherently dramatic in that the focus is on dialogue and gesture. Maxim Maximych's aborted move to hug Pechorin; Pechorin's cold handshake, eagerly met by the older man; Pechorin's stilted, formal tone and the staff captain's visible affront and disappointment; Pechorin's final, dismissive wave out of the carriage window – these gestures convey the dynamic relationship between Pechorin and Maxim Maximych in the manner of theater, through external action rather than any attempt to probe inward character. This distancing effect is compounded by our

[163] Boris Eikhenbaum notes that such "devices for playing with narrative form" [приемы игры с повествовательной формой] were already well-established in Russian prose of the 1830s, and that their purpose was "to create the illusion of the simultaneity of the events taking place and their description, or of the real existence of the depicted characters and the narrator himself" [чтобы создать иллюзию одновременности происходящих событий и их описания или реального существования изображаемых персонажей и самого рассказчика]. See Boris Eikhenbaum, *Lermontov: Opyt istoriko-literaturnoi otsenki* (Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1924), Ch. 3. Translations mine.

[164] Translation by Paul Foote, *A Hero of Our Time* (London: Penguin Books, 2001 [1966]), p. 47. Subsequent citations to this translation of *A Hero of Our Time* will appear parenthetically in the text by page number.

suspicion that some or even most of these gestures have been predetermined by a social script.[165] Pechorin's ennui strikes the reader as affected, especially in light of the discussion between the narrator and Maxim Maximych in "Bela" concerning the fashionable boredom of the English.[166] While Maxim Maximych's behavior, perhaps more than that of any other character in the novel, gives the impression of authenticity, he, too, is following a social script of sorts: he quickly modifies his warm, open gestures to match Pechorin's detached ones, which he reads (correctly) as aloofness. The focus on gestures, tone, and dialogue—on the external indicators of inward processes—as viewed through the eyes of a passive audience (the narrator) contributes to the theatricality of the scene. The dramatic effect is compounded by the episode's internal cohesiveness: the reunion represents the denouement of "Bela" and "Maxim Maximych" and offers a sense of closure, precisely in the manner of a scene in a stage drama.[167]

The overall effect of Pechorin's introduction in *A Hero of Our Time*, then, is quite different from Georges' introduction in *Princess Ligovskaia*. The latter dutifully informs us that Georges will inherit 3,000 souls in the Saratov, Voronezh, and Kaluga provinces, that his father is dead and that he has a 16-year-old sister, and then shows us our hero alone in his office, where he experiences a shock upon being handed a card by his footman inscribed with the name "Ligovskoi." Already in this version of the text we see Lermontov's impulse to suggest inner emotions through dramatic outward expressions: the narrator notes Pechorin's pale face and flashing eyes as he throws the card into the fire, and purports to be unable to convey his hero's thoughts directly on account of Pechorin's shielded face: "Pechorin laid these fragile remnants on the table, sat down again in his armchair and covered his face with his hands – and although I am quite adept at reading the promptings of the soul on physiognomies, for precisely this reason I cannot in any way tell you his thoughts" [Печорин положил эти бренные остатки на стол, сел опять в свои креслы и закрыл лицо руками – и хотя я очень хорошо читаю побуждения души на физиономиях, но по этой именно причине не могу никак рассказать вам его мыслей] (4:169).[168] But the overall impression of Pechorin with which this scene leaves us suggests a stable and knowable, if somewhat mysterious figure. The Pechorin who appears in "Maxim Maximych" is altogether different: hidden behind a carefully curated social

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[165] Anne F. Widmayer identifies a similar distancing technique as one of the hallmarks of theatricality in the novels of Aphra Behn: "Since all of the characters are concerned with how their actions are interpreted by an internal audience – and the narrator is also aware of the audience reading her work – any sense that the reading audience is given a closer view of a character's thoughts is immediately undercut by the distancing effect of dramatic scenes. Dramatic set pieces in Behn's prose narratives end up mocking any attempts in prose to give characters a coherent identity." See Widmayer, *Theatre and the novel from Behn to Fielding* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2015), p. 25.

[166] "The captain could not understand these subtleties. He shook his head. 'I suppose it was the French who started this fashion of being bored?' he said, smiling artfully. 'No, the English.' 'Aha, so that's it! They always were a drunken lot,' he retorted" (36). [Штабс-капитан не понял этих тонкостей, покачал головою и улыбнулся лукаво: — А все, чай, французы ввели моду скучать? — Нет, Англичане. — А-га, вот что! … — отвечал он, — да ведь они всегда были отъявленные пьяницы!] (4:317)

[167] Locating moments of theatricality in Anthony Trollope's novels, G.M. Harvey observes that "The dramatic scene in the novel is a limited area of time and its significant impact depends upon the reader's sense of closure and completion." See Harvey, "Scene and Form: Trollope as a Dramatic Novelist," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 16, No. 4, Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1976), p. 634.

[168] Helena Goscilo reads this "grossly overdrawn" scene as inherently theatrical, noting of Pechorin's flashing eyes, feverish pacing, and distraught pose that "These descriptive elements are all stage directions, and in a theatre their execution would not appear overdone if handled by a gifted actor." See Goscilo, "Stage and Page: Drama's Incursion into Russian Fiction of the 1830s" (Zeszyty Naukowe Wyzszej Szkoly Pedagogicznej W Bydgoszczy. Studia Filologiczne, 1983), pp. 99-100.

performance that is staged for the benefit of Maxim Maximych, observed by the narrator, and then transmitted to us, the reader-audience, the 1840 Pechorin appears in the novel as if wearing a series of masks. The theatricality of the reunion scene in *A Hero of Our Time*, when contrasted with Pechorin's first appearance in *Princess Ligovskaia*, suggests that the hero's *self*, the self at the heart of this novel, is fragmented and, moreover, that its embodiment in Pechorin's physical form as described through the literary discourse of the novel is performative and unreliable.

One might argue that this initial obfuscation or masking of the hero in "Bela" and "Maxim Maximych" is countered by the insight we receive into Pechorin's inner life in the novel's subsequent sections, which are purportedly taken from Pechorin's journal and narrated in his own voice. According to this reading, the discourse of each section of the novel draws gradually closer to Pechorin's psyche, proceeding as it does from authorial discourse (the Preface) to a tale about Pechorin narrated by a third-person homodiegetic character ("Bela"), to an encounter with Pechorin himself narrated by the homodiegetic first-person narrator ("Maxim Maximych") and finally to the journals themselves.[169] However, at the same time and in precisely the opposite direction, the novel's theatricality, which only begins with the appearance of Pechorin in "Maxim Maximych," actually *increases* as the various narratives unfold. Pechorin's performativity, his tendency to interact with others (including himself, or at least the self to which he narrates his experiences in the diary) by adopting a role or staging a scene, only becomes more evident once we enter his journal. The section of the novel that is most preoccupied with theater is "Princess Mary," which is also the most truly diaristic—and thus supposedly "direct" in its representation of Pechorin—of the five inset narratives.

Theater, theatricality, performativity, and scriptedness have often been discussed in scholarship on *A Hero of Our Time*. For example, Robert Reid argues that "Princess Mary" combines diary and drama in a sort of proto-filmic script: "a drama scripted in diary form for performance in real life."[170] William Mills Todd discusses the novel's reliance on theater metaphors and notes that in "Princess Mary," "the theater has become [Pechorin's] model for analyzing those around him."[171] Todd compiles an exhaustive list of the novel's metaphorical allusions to the theater, including references to a "denouement," "fifth act," "actors," "poses," "costumes," "scenes," and "playing roles." In this chapter I will build upon these and similar analyses by considering Lermontov's appeal to formal dramatic techniques in constructing the

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[169] For example, in the foreword to his translation of *A Hero of Our Time* Nabokov writes, "It will be marked by the good reader that the structural trick consists in bringing Pechorin gradually nearer and nearer until he takes over; but by the time he takes over he is dead. In the first story, Pechorin is twice removed from the reader since his personality is described through Maksim Maksimich, whose words are transmitted to us by Narrator One. In the second story the personality of Narrator Two no longer stands between Pechorin and Narrator One, who, at last, sees the hero for himself. Maksim Maksimich is, in fact, pathetically eager to produce the real Pechorin on top of the subject of his yarn. And, finally, in the last three stories, both Narrator One and Narrator Two step aside, and the reader meets Pechorin, Narrator Three, face to face." See Vladimir Nabokov, foreword to *A Hero of Our Time*, trans. Vladimir Nabokov and Dmitri Nabokov (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1958). See also Lewis Bagby, "Narrative Double-Voicing in Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Autumn, 1978), pp. 265-286; and Boris Eikhenbaum, "Geroi nashego vremeni," *Stat'i o Lermontove* (Moscow and Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1961), pp. 221-265. David Powelstock characterizes the novel's *siuzhet* as a "seduction of the reader," who is drawn gradually closer to the paradox at the center of Pechorin's personality in what is finally a test of the reader's own moral judgment. See Powelstock, *Becoming Mikhail Lermontov: The Ironies of Romantic Individualism in Nicholas I's Russia* (Northwestern UP, 2005), pp. 354-393.

[170] Reid, *Lermontov's 'A Hero of Our Time,'* p. 64

[171] William Mills Todd III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1986), pp. 152-154

form of *A Hero of Our Time*, as well as his attempt to arrive at a new literary form uniquely capable of representing the simultaneous freedom and un-freedom of embodiment through this hybrid mixing of the theatrical and the novelistic.

It is important to first clarify what I mean by the terms "theatrical" and "dramatic." While the first two chapters of this dissertation investigate the competing affordances of literature vis-à-vis other distinct artforms (music and painting), this chapter takes as its focus the relationship between prose fiction and drama, which is more often understood as a literary subgenre than as a distinct artform. The question of a theatrical work's status as either a literary text or as something else entirely is at the heart of theater studies. Essentially, it is the question of scripting vs. staging, and which of the two—the scripted text or the staged performance—is preeminent. The emergence of performance studies as a distinct field of inquiry apart from traditional theater studies over the past half-century is motivated in part by a desire to develop an account of "nondramatic, non-theatrical, nonscripted, ceremonial, and everyday-life performances, performances that appear to depart from the authority of texts."[172] Performance studies, then, posits that the traditional understanding of theatrical performance is that it is authorized by a text, which is the one true, original work, of which the various theatrical productions are merely instantiations. This viewpoint is borne out by much of the classical writing on theater and tragedy going as far back as Aristotle, for whom "the staged event is basically superfluous."[173] Such an approach, which equates a theatrical work with the scripted text, makes it impossible to think of "theater" as anything other than a genre of literature. On the other hand, more recent studies of performance reveal that all human activity could fall into the category of the performative or "theatrical" in the sense that our actions tend to follow socially or culturally prescribed "scripts." Theater, then, simply bares the device – in reality, all the world is a stage.

My solution to the problem of defining "theater" in this chapter is twofold. First, I will take my cue from Richard Bauman, who in the *International Encyclopedia of Communications* argues that "all performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, through which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action."[174] In traditional theater the potential or "ideal" is the character as scripted and imagined by the author, whom the performer must then embody in dramatic action. I will argue that, in a literary narrative that strives toward the ideal of theatricality, the operation is somewhat inverted: the written characters are imagined as actors in a play, that is, as embodied performances of scripted roles. In other words, there is an additional layer of doubleness: the literary character must recall or "embody" an actor, who is in turn embodying a script.

It is not surprising that Lermontov at the end of the 1830s would view embodied theatrical performance as a model for representing imagined selves. Lermontov was a lifelong theatergoer who wrote five plays before trying his hand at a novel, and whose earliest creative fictions took the form of plays that he acted out with wax marionettes as a child.[175] His letters reveal that he often attended the opera and the theater as a student in Moscow. In a letter to his aunt Maria Shan-Girei of 1829 he writes with great admiration of the actor Pavel Stepanovich

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[172] W.B. Worthen, "Drama, Performativity, and Performance," *PMLA*, Vol. 113, No. 5 (October 1998), p. 1093

[173] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Tragedy and Dramatic* Theatre, trans. Erik Butler (Abingdon and NY: Routledge, 2016), p. 1.

[174] This summary of Bauman's argument is provided by Marvin Carlson in *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (New York; London: Routledge, 1996), p. 6.

[175] See Vadim Vatsuro, "Dramaturgiia Lermontova," *Vadim Vatsuro o Lermontove* (Novoe izdatel'stvo, 2008), pp. 536-7.

Mochalov, a favorite of the young theater public who played such heroic roles as Karl Moore.[176] In 1838 Belinskii would write an article titled "Gamlet, drama Shekspira" on the occasion of Mochalov's performance as Hamlet, which opened in Moscow in January of 1837. In this article Belinskii describes the achievement of Mochalov's performance as the powerful embodiment of poetic images:

> Yes, it is necessary that our every word should be permeated with blood, bile, tears, groans, and that because of our living and poetic images, some beautiful melancholy face should flash before the eyes of the readers and a voice should be heard that is full of longing, rage, love, suffering, and in all of this always harmonious, always supple, always penetrating the soul and shocking its innermost strings…Then we would have fully achieved our goal and would have done for our readers the very thing Mochalov did for us.
>
> Да, надобно, чтобы каждое наше слово было проникнуто кровью, желчью, слезами, стонами и чтобы из-за наших живых и поэтических образов мелькало перед глазами читателей какое-то прекрасное меланхолическое лицо и раздавался голос, полный тоски, бешенства, любви, страдания, и во всем этом всегда гармонический, всегда гибкий, всегда проникающий в душу и потрясающий ее самые сокровенные струны... Вот тогда бы мы вполне достигли своей цели и сделали бы для наших читателей то же самое, что сделал для нас Мочалов.[177]

The emphasis in Belinskii's description is on physicality: blood, bile, tears, groans, a resounding voice. While there are no comparable passages in any of Lermontov's letters or private writings (of which we have access to relatively few), it is probable that Lermontov would have read Belinskii's article and that he may have been influenced by similar late Romantic theoretical discourse around dramatic theater as the embodiment of a poetic text or ideal.[178]

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[176] Letter to M.A. Shan-Girei, Spring 1829 (4:536-537)

[177] Visarion Belinskii, "'Gamlet,' drama Shekspira. Mochalov v roli Gamleta" (1838), *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1953-59), vol. 2, pp. 253-345. Translation mine. This performance of *Hamlet*, based on a new translation by Nikolai Polevoi, was a major sensation in the world of Russian imperial theater, one that initiated a new emphasis on Shakespearean tragedies—especially *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Othello*—in repertories across Moscow, St. Petersburg, and the provinces. See Marc Slonim, *Russian Theater from the Empire to the Soviets* (New York: Collier Books, 1961-2), Chapter 2: "From Romantic Drama to Gogol."

[178] Belinskii's admiring account of Mochalov's performance places him firmly on one side of a fierce debate about acting styles that preoccupied Russian theater critics in the 1830s. The debate surrounded a rivalry between the major theaters in the two imperial centers—the Alexandrinskii Theater in St. Petersburg and the Malyi Theater in Moscow—as well as their respective star actors: Vasilii Andreevich Karatygin in Petersburg and Mochalov in Moscow. As is evident from Belinskii's description, Mochalov represented the ecstatic approach to acting, while Karatygin was known for his careful, controlled performances. See Slonim, Chapter 2; and S.S. Danilov and M.G. Portugalova, *Russkii dramaticheskii teatr XIX veka*, Vol. 1 (Moscow and Leningrad, 1957), pp. 178-94. Lermontov's 1829 letter to his aunt aligns him, like Belinskii, with the Mochalov camp: "Do you remember, dear aunt, you said that our (Moscow) actors are worse than those in Petersburg. What a pity that you didn't see 'The Gambler' or the tragedy 'The Robbers' here [in Moscow]. Many of the Petersburg gentlemen agree that these plays are better than the ones there [in Petersburg], and that Mochalov in many ways surpasses Karatygin" (translation mine). The terms of the Mochalov–Karatygin rivalry were perhaps influenced by the major theoretical debate in German and English Romantic drama in the late 18th century: the "tug-of war […] in the very art of acting, the

In defining theater and the theatrical, I will also appeal to the specific generic conventions of late 18th- and early 19th-century verse drama, the plays with which Lermontov himself would have been most familiar.[179] In doing so I will draw on work done over the past two decades by scholars of British and French literature of the 18th and 19th centuries concerning the simultaneous interconnections and divergences of the European novel and the theatrical productions contemporary to its rise. In *Theater Figures: The Production of the Nineteenth-Century British Novel*, Emily Allen argues that the British novel defined itself in part against popular theater.[180] Allen shows how this tendency to view theater and the novel as opposing genres has persisted in novel scholarship, whose view of the novel as the preferred genre of the growing bourgeois middle class relegates theater to an artform of the lower classes and the degenerate aristocracy. Of course, Allen is concerned with a historical context very distinct from the one touched upon in this chapter. The social, economic, and cultural systems of 1830s-40s Imperial Russia differ in important ways from those of Britain and France: the Russian reading public lagged far behind its Western European cousins, and the theatrical tradition, less native to Russia, had by Lermontov's time a relatively short history.[181] However, Allen's characterization of the various binary oppositions which the 19th-century European novel posits between itself and the theater are helpful for thinking about the distinctions between these two artforms in the 19th century.

To summarize and systematize Allen's points, these oppositions include: 1) private artform (the novel) vs. public artform (the theater); 2) inward experience of the subjective self (the novel) vs. outward performance within a public or interpersonal space (the theater); 3) authentic feelings (the novel) vs. false, performative feelings (the theater); 4) unembodied experience (the novel) vs. embodied experience (the theater); 5) the individual as stable self (the novel) vs. the individual as multiple selves (the theater). Part of Allen's project is to trouble these dichotomies and illustrate the deep interconnectedness of theatrical drama and novelistic narrative. However, these theoretical binaries are helpful in clarifying the reason that Lermontov appeals so often to images, metaphors, and devices from the theater in *A Hero of Our Time*. One of the novel's central tasks is to pose the questions necessary to reach an understanding of the

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extremes of tempered restraint as opposed to flamboyant histrionics"—in other words, the debate over whether actors should adopt an attitude of "distance" or "empathy" toward their characters. See Frederick Burwick, *Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting* (Cambridge UP, 2009), p. 2. For a further discussion of this debate, see Gloria Flaherty, "Empathy and Distance: German Romantic Theories of Acting Reconsidered," *Romantic Drama*, ed. Gerald Gillespie (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Bejamins Publishing Co., 1993).

[179] Eikhenbaum identifies the following as major theatrical influences on Lermontov: Schiller and the Sturm-und-drang movement; Shakespeare; Byron's verse dramas; French romantic drama and melodrama; and the tradition of Russian verse comedy. See Boris Eikhenbaum, "Piat' redaktsii 'Maskarada,'" *Lermontov M.Iu. Maskarad: Sbornik statei* (Moscow and Leningrad: Izd. VTO, 1941). In addition to opera and ballet, the most popular theatrical genres of the 1830s were melodrama and vaudeville. For a thorough overview of the most frequently staged plays and the most successful melodramatic and vaudevillian Russian playwrights of the Romantic era, see Anatolii Iakovlevich Al'tshuller, *Teatr proslavlennykh masterov: Ocherki istorii Aleksandrinskoi stseny* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1968), Glava pervaia: Aleksandrinskii teatr 1830-1850kh godov.

[180] Emily Allen, *Theater Figures: The Production of the Nineteenth-Century British Novel* (Ohio State University, 2003). See also J. Jeffrey Franklin, *Serious Play: The Cultural Form of the Nineteenth-Century Realist Novel* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

[181] In *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin*, Todd outlines the major differences between the Russian and Western literary spheres of the 19th century, including the lack of an established middle class, reading public, and literary marketplace. Melissa Frazier suggests that the "literary public" emerged in Russia as a concept or an aspiration in the 1820s-30s, but in reality came about only later. See Frazier, *Romantic Encounters: Writers, Readers, and the 'Library for Reading,'* pp. 15-18.

self. What is the self? Where are the borders been self and non-self? Is the self a stable or an unstable entity, and to what extent is the self free from external (pre-)determination? Inasmuch as the novel and the theater are taken to offer differing images of the self (private vs. public, authentic vs. performative, and so on), both artforms must be employed in a literary attempt to understand the limits and freedom inherent in the self's embodiment.

Also helpful is Anne Widmayer's *Theatre and the novel from Behn to Fielding*. Widmayer, like Allen, argues that the connection between playwriting and novel-writing runs deeper than has traditionally been supposed. Of particular importance for Widmayer is the fact that so many early practitioners of the novel were also playwrights. Lermontov, too, falls into this category of playwright-turned-novelist, and so Widmayer's approach—to delineate the dramatic techniques specific to each writer's plays, and then to determine whether a version of those techniques is also employed in their novels, suggesting a cross-contamination of the dramatic and the novelistic—may also be suggestive for my analysis of Lermontov. *Masquerade* and *Two Brothers* have often been discussed in connection with *A Hero of Our Time* with regard to theme and character. This chapter will read these three texts together with an eye toward *form*. Are there dramatic techniques in *Masquerade* and *Two Brothers* that also appear in, or which otherwise inform the narrative techniques of *A Hero of Our Time*?

I will begin by turning to "Princess Mary," the section of *A Hero of Our Time* that grew directly out of the society tale storyline in *Princess Ligovskaia* (the novel's parallel storyline, about the impoverished clerk Krasinskii, was abandoned entirely). I will then turn outward to a consideration of the novel as a whole.

II. A Tale of Two Princesses: From Princess Ligovskaia to Princess Mary

Of the five tales that make up *A Hero of Our Time*, "Princess Mary" is the one that engages most directly and persistently with theatrical metaphors and discourse. Paradoxically, it is also the most truly diaristic section of the novel. The other two sections included in "Pechorin's Journal" [Zhurnal Pechorina]—"Taman" and "The Fatalist"—are not primarily about Pechorin himself (indeed, it remains unclear at what point Lermontov began to view the narrator of "Taman" as Pechorin at all)[182]; instead, Pechorin serves in these two tales as the narrator of other people's stories (the smugglers and Vulich, respectively). These other stories play an important role in developing our understanding of Pechorin's character, but only "Princess Mary" fully follows the conventions of the diary form. The fact that the most diaristic section of *A Hero of Our Time* is also the section most preoccupied with the theater is striking when we recall that the theater is a public artform, one which (following Allen's dichotomies) depends upon performative rather than authentic feelings and which views the individual (who might play a series of different roles) as an inherently unstable entity – in other words, it is an artform premised upon a concept of the self that is entirely at odds with the image of the self that emerges from the diary form.

And yet, "Princess Mary" features numerous references to the theater. All of these references are proposed by Pechorin, who by Todd's calculation uses "approximately forty theatrical terms to organize his presentation of social dynamics in 'Princess Mary.'"[183] These

[182] "The idea of combining [the various tales] into a novel seems to have occurred to Lermontov in 1838 and some authorities maintain that Taman was written a year earlier without, therefore, any intention by Lermontov of including it in the novel." Reid, *Lermontov's 'A Hero of Our Time*, p. 1.
[183] Todd, *Fiction and Society*, p. 152

include his characterization of ongoing events as a "farce," "melodrama," "bourgeois tragedy," or "comedy" ('*Finita la commedia*,' he declares after Grushnitskii's death), his reference to himself as the "instrument of the fifth act" [необходимое лицо пятого акта], and his tendency to describe social events in Piatigorsk using terms such as "actors," "roles," "poses," and "scenes."[184] Thus, in addition to being the section of the novel that is most focused on the internal, private life of Pechorin, "Princess Mary" is also the section that is most preoccupied with theatricality, giving rise to tensions between the private and the public, between the subjective, inner self and the outer, performative self. In my investigation of Lermontov's attempts to characterize the 1840 Pechorin using an experimental mix of the affordances of both drama and prose narrative, I will therefore focus on "Princess Mary." The first question that arises is whether the diary form is at odds with the narrative's theatrical discourse, or whether the two forms somehow function together within Lermontov's artistic concept.

One way of approaching this question is to examine the evolution from *Princess Ligovskaia* to "Princess Mary." In many ways Lermontov appears to have worked backward from the proto-realist dual plot of the former to the unabashedly Romantic society tale-cum-Caucasian adventure story of the latter. In addition to alterations on the level of plot and character, two of the most important changes to the form and discourse of *Princess Ligovskaia* in its transformation into "Princess Mary" are the shift to the diary genre and the addition of extended and thematically significant references to the theater.

This is not to say that there are no theatrical elements in the nine extant chapters of *Princess Ligovskaia*. The image of the theater plays an important role in the unfinished text. It is the site of two pivotal dramatic encounters that set the stage for the rest of the novel. Pechorin's first glimpse of Vera Ligovskaia upon her arrival in St. Petersburg and his confrontation with the clerk Krasinskii both occur at the Alexandrinskii Theater during a performance of *Fenella* (*La muette de Portici*). Lermontov makes clear the parallel between these dramatic confrontations in the narrative and the dramatic action onstage in a theatrical metaphor at the start of Chapter 3: "Dear readers, you have all seen Fenella a hundred times, you have all thunderously called out for Novitskaia and Holland – and therefore I will skip over the three remaining acts and raise my curtain at the precise moment when the curtain of the Aleksandrinskii theater falls" [Почтенные читатели, вы все видели сто раз Фенеллу, вы все с громом вызывали Новицкую и Голланда, - и поэтому я перескочу через остальные 3 акта и подыму свой занавес в ту самую минуту, как опустился занавес Александринского театра…] (4:184). The end of the onstage drama at the Alexandrinskii marks the beginning of the drama offstage: as the curtain falls on the former, so it rises on the latter.[185] Also present in the Alexandrinskii theater scene is the motif of theatergoers as the true performers. Pechorin sits in his seat observing the fashionable audience members through his lorgnette: "he began to point his lorgnette at the other boxes; in them he recognized many ballroom acquaintances, with whom he sometimes bowed, sometimes not, depending on whether or not they noticed him; he was not offended by the world's indifference toward him, because he assessed society at its true value" [(он) стал наводить лорнет на другие ложи; в них он узнал множество бальных знакомых, с

[184] Todd notes that the theater as a metaphor for social life was readily available by Lermontov's time, and that "theatrical" was an adjective already used at the time in Russia to characterize artificial social behavior. See ibid., p. 153.

[185] Helena Goscilo proposes a more direct parallel between the action in Chapter 2 of *Princess Ligovskaia* and the action that is occurring simultaneously on stage in Act II of *Fenella*. See Goscilo, "Stage and Page: Drama's Incursion into Russian Fiction of the 1830s," footnote 43, pp. 109-110.

которыми иногда кланялся, иногда нет; смотря по тому, замечали его или нет; он не оскорблялся равнодушием света к нему, потому что оценил свет в настоящую его цену…] (4:175-176). This moment underscores the implicit parallel between the theatricality of the events onstage and the performativity of the social interactions among the high society theatergoers.[186]

In *Princess Ligovskaia* the theater topos ultimately serves as a fairly straightforward metaphor to suggest the artificiality of society life. The implication that there is something theatrical about the two major plot events—Pechorin's glimpse of Vera and his confrontation with Krasinskii—is suggestive, and is perhaps intended to draw our attention to the strange "fatedness" of both these meetings. Pechorin had a presentiment that he would meet Vera; and the chance encounter with Krasinskii so soon after he was accidentally struck by Pechorin's carriage is highly improbable. However, in *Princess Ligovskaia* the thematic parallel between the plot action and theatrical conventions has no space to develop. Once the action moves away from the Alexandrinskii, the engagement with theatrical discourse largely stops.

What is needed to develop this parallel further is a narrator who perceives—or shapes—events through the lens of dramatic performance. The larger artistic problem that remains unresolved in the extant chapters of *Princess Ligovskaia* is how to convincingly convey the hero's interiority and the interiority of the other characters. Not only are we granted far less insight into Pechorin's thoughts in *Princess Ligovskaia*—in which a face concealed by a hand is enough to impede the narrator's ability to reveal his hero's feelings—but we are given only intermittent and unreliable access to the other characters' emotions, too. Both the narrator and the 1836 Pechorin are significantly less skilled at "reading" other people than the Pechorin of *A Hero of Our Time*. And yet Lermontov required this interior access, or the appearance of it, to achieve his artistic aim in creating a full picuture of his hero on both the levels of psychology and physical embodiment.

I argue that, in turning from *Princess Ligovskaia* to *A Hero of Our Time*, Lermontov sought recourse in two distinct theatrical conventions to convey interiority. One is the dramatic utterance—the soliloquy, the aside, and the dramatic monologue, reimagined in "Princess Mary" as features of the diary—and the other is the dramatic gesture, the system of visual signals used by an actor to convey their character's feelings or intentions to the audience. In the first half of "Princess Mary," Pechorin reveals his thoughts to the reader in brief confessional passages that supplement and comment upon the scenes that make up most of the May and early June entries. These self-reflective passages can be read as a transformation of the soliloquy and the aside, which Lermontov used extensively in constructing the tragic characters of Arbenin in *Masquerade* and Aleksandr Radin in *Two Brothers*. The 1840 Pechorin is also an expert at composing and delivering impromptu dramatic monologues in order to produce a certain impression and at interpreting and employing gestures, both traits that makes him an effective stage director as he manipulates those around him into playing out the scenes he has scripted.[187]

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[186] C.f. Belinskii's sketch on the Alexandrinskii Theater in *The Physiology of St. Petersburg* [*Fiziologiia Peterburga*] (1845), in which Belinskii, in contrast to Lermontov, focuses his description on the emergent non-aristocratic public sphere rather than the theater's high-society audience members. V.G. Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v trinadtsati tomakh* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1953-59), vol. 9.

[187] Frederick Burwick outlines the increasing importance of gestures in British drama of the 18th and 19th-centuries: in this period, "the use and understanding of gesture underwent radical changes affecting conventions in acting […] During the latter half of the eighteenth century there was a growing recognition of how gesture revealed or defined character. Gesture in acting too was seen to have other implications beyond expressing thought or feeling. It enabled a character to construct the very space upon the stage […] Books on gesture began to deliberate on more complex

Ultimately, then, the early sections of "Princess Mary" are made up of alternating "scripted" scenes and Pechorin's soliloquies or asides to the audience in the form of self-reflective diary passages. We will turn first to Pechorin's script, the "drama" that he constructs and stages by manipulating those around him into acting out parts and by adopting a part himself. Carefully choreographed physical behavior and gestures allow Pechorin to interpret the roles that other characters are playing and to incorporate those roles into his master drama, as well as to convince the other players of the authenticity of his own performance.

As soon as he arrives in Piatigorsk Pechorin begins looking for inspiration for his script. This is not a written document—Pechorin only records some of his plans in his journal in advance, more often commenting that things are "going according to plan" or "going my way" as the action unfolds—and each "scene" is necessarily "staged" before the next one can be fully devised, since some things (though in the end surprisingly few) depend upon chance or the behavior of the other "actors," who are unaware that they have been engaged in a drama at all. And yet the word "script" is helpful because it allows us to characterize Pechorin's maneuverings in the spa town as predetermined and deliberate, building toward a specific *denouement*. Pechorin conceives an original model upon which the ensuing action is to be based, and his goal in manipulating the unwitting *dramatis personae* to behave in a certain way (in "staging" his script) is to have their behavior align as closely as possible with that model.

Pechorin is ready to embark on his script right away. As many commentators have noted, the theatrical element in "Princess Mary" is introduced almost immediately, with Pechorin's reference to the mountainous setting as an "amphitheater": "Beyond the town stands a massive amphitheatre of mountains, bluer and hazier in the distance" (70) […а там, дальше, амфитеатром громоздятся горы все синее и туманнее] (4:356). The natural landscape forms a theatrical venue in which the spa town stages its society dramas, and we are given to understand that social performance is at the heart of daily life in Piatigorsk. However, these performances follow conventional social scripts that are determined by the expectations of the anonymous *belle monde*: what they lack is an author figure, a playwright-director, someone who consciously orders events, selects the actors, and guides them as they body forth the scripted drama. This is the role taken up by Pechorin when he arrives at Piatigorsk in early May.

Pechorin sets off to seek the raw materials for his drama at the Elizabeth spring immediately upon his arrival: "I'm off to the Elizabeth spring. I hear all the spa society gathers there in the morning" (70) [Пойду к Елизаветинскому источнику: там, говорят, утром собирается все водяное общество] (4:356). What follows is essentially a series of auditions, though the prospective actors are unaware that they are at a casting call. Pechorin considers the various men and women gathered at the spring and pays particular attention to Grushntiskii and Princess Mary, both of whom catch his attention for very different reasons. Assessing Grushnitskii, Pechorin behaves like a director who is at first unconvinced that the actor in front of him will suit the role he has in mind. Grushnitskii is too declamatory, too blatantly theatrical, and too committed to the Byronic pose – in other words, an overactor[188]:

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instincts and motives influencing the body movement. Corresponding changes were taking place in figure painting and acting." See Burwick, *Romantic Drama: Acting and Reacting*, p. 80.

[188] Lydiia Ginzburg contrasts Grushntiskii's naïve Byronism with Pechorin's self-aware posturing in *Tvorcheskii put' Lermontova* (Leningrad: Khudozhetsvennaia literatura, 1940), pp. 169-170. Gary Cox describes Grushnitskii as "playing a Byronic role but unwilling to admit it, a character totally lacking in self-awareness." See Gary Cox, "Dramatic Genre as a Tool of Characterization in Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*," *Russian Literature XI* (North Holland Publishing Company: 1982), p. 168. Cox reads the dramatic elements in "Princess Mary" as Lermontov's attempt to work through and move beyond Romantic conventions, towards psychological realism.

> When he talks, he has a habit of tossing his head back, and all the time he twirls his moustache with his left hand, as he holds his crutch with his right […] Grushnitsky has a special passion for declamation. The moment the conversation goes beyond ordinary topics he bombards you with words […] He's spent so much time trying to convince others that he's not of this world and that fate has some mysterious sufferings in store for him, that he practically believes it himself. That's why he flaunts the thick private's greatcoat. (72-73)
>
> Он закладывает голову назад, когда говорит, и поминутно крутит усы левой рукой, ибо правою опирается на костыль […] Грушницкого страсть была декламировать: он закидывал вас словами, как скоро разговор выходил из круга обыкновенных понятий […] Он так часто старался уверить других в том, что он существо, не созданное для мира, обреченное каким-то тайным страданиям, что он сам почти в этом уверился. Оттого-то он так гордо носит свою толстую солдатскую шинель. (4:359)

But Grushnitskii's style might be amusing in the right scenes – with society women, for example: "I'm curious to see him with women. I imagine he really puts it on then" (73) [Мне любопытно видеть его с женщинами: тут-то он, я думаю, старается!] (4:360). The ideal society woman for Pechorin's purposes appears almost immediately: Mary Ligovskaia, a young, elegant beauty of whom Grushnitskii is already enamored, though she has been in Piatigorsk for all of three days. Pechorin has the opportunity to observe the pair together, and to see for himself how Grushnitskii is with women, in the famous water glass scene. This scene, too, plays out like an audition for Pechorin's drama: the *dramatis personae*—Pechorin refers to them as such: "The actors were placed as follows…" (75) [Действующие лица находились вот в каком положении…] (4:363-364)—are performing for themselves and each other, not for Pechorin's benefit; but Pechorin is nevertheless present as the unseen judge of these performances, and he builds a whole drama on the basis of this audition, which also becomes the first act. As Pechorin soon informs Werner, the prologue [завязка] has already been staged; the task now is to guide things toward a *denouement* [развязка]: "'The stage is set,' I cried, delighted. 'We'll see if we can provide a *denouement* for this comedy'" (81) [Завязка есть! – закричал я в восхищении, – об развязке этой комедии мы похлопочем] (4:371).

What, then, is the drama Pechorin is scripting? What sort of play is this, and what is the overarching plot? Pechorin refers to his drama here as a "comedy," but the genre definition doesn't hold: elsewhere, Pechorin's reflections on the unfolding action suggest that he thinks of it as a tragedy.[189] Comedy or tragedy, it is without doubt a society drama, the Romantic genre in which Lermontov himself was most accomplished as a playwright. And indeed, Pechorin's script is one that Lermontov himself might have written, had he continued trying to embody his hero in dramatic form rather than turning to novelistic discourse. Lermontov began work on *Two Brothers*, his final play, in early 1836, the same year he started writing *Princess Ligovskaia*.

[189] Pechorin's designation changes in accordance with his mood and his attitude toward the ongoing action. He uses the term "comedy" to signify his emotional distance from events, suggesting that these events are playing out merely for his amusement; whether sincerely (as in the conversation with Werner) or ironically (as in his pronouncement "'*Finita la commedia*'" upon Grushnitskii's death). As we shall see, he uses the term "tragedy" at moments when he is forced to acknowledge his own role and emotional investment in the action.

Given that Lermontov was working on the two texts at almost the same time, it is hard not to see Aleksandr Radin and Georges Pechorin as iterations of the same basic character. While the central heroes of all five of Lermontov's stage dramas—*The Spaniards* [*Ispantsy*] (1830), *Menschen und Leidenschaften* (1830), *A Strange Man* [*Strannyi chelovek*] (1831), *Masquerade* (1835), and *Two Brothers* (1836)—bear a certain resemblance (perhaps stemming from their collective indebtedness to Schiller, whose plays Lermontov read and—when possible—watched avidly), the hero-antagonists of *Masquerade* and *Two Brothers* have often been viewed as semi-direct precursors to Pechorin, with the more psychologically developed Aleksandr appearing as a stepping stone between Evgenii Arbenin and the hero of Lermontov's novel. The "drama" that Pechorin scripts and in which he also stars in "Princess Mary" could almost be another of Lermontov's own stage plays, a dramatic successor to *Masquerade* and *Two Brothers* in place of the text that was actually written, the unfinished *Princess Ligovskaia*.

The plot of Pechorin's "drama" follows a young, beautiful princess (Mary Ligovskaia – a surname recycled not only from *Princess Ligovskaia* but also from the heroine of *Two Brothers*) who comes to Piatigorsk and makes the acquaintance of two men. One (Grushnitskii) is a buffoonish man posing as a Romantic-Byronic hero. The other is Pechorin. The role that Pechorin imagines for himself is harder to delineate because it requires untangling the adopted pose from Pechorin's "authentic" self, something that Pechorin himself often seems incapable of doing. However, if we think of one of these two selves as a "role" and the other as the person in charge of the script—who has also decided to play one of the characters—then the bifurcation becomes easier to manage. The character called "Pechorin" in Pechorin's play—the role he has chosen to adopt—is the true Romantic hero, a noble but at times self-destructive individual who has suffered greately in his life and who is now driven to cause the suffering of others, either unwittingly or out of despair. In this way he recalls Evgenii Arbenin and Aleksandr Radin, and his more distant ancestors are the heroes of Byron and Schiller. This character receives its clearest elucidation in the monologue Pechorin delivers to Mary at the end of the June 3rd entry: "Yes, that's been my lot ever since I was a boy. Everyone saw in my face evil traits that I didn't possess. But they assumed I did, and so they developed…" (106) [Да, такова была моя участь с самого детства. Все читали на моем лице признаки дурных чувств, которых не было; но их предполагали – и они родились…] (4:405). Pechorin-the-character has been devised by Pechorin-the-dramatist to fit perfectly into a dramatic love triangle with Mary, who has already proven herself susceptible to Byronic posturing, and Grushnitskii, the false hero.

Like most of Lermontov's own dramas, Pechorin's play loosely follows a traditional five-act structure: prologue, conflict/rising movement, rising action (climax), falling action, denouement.[190] Most of these "acts" are comprised of one to two "scenes." Act I, the prologue—in Russian, *zaviazka*—consists of the initial meeting between Pechorin and Grushnitskii and the encounter between Grushnitskii and Mary over the dropped water glass. Pechorin refers to these two scenes directly as the *zaviazka* in his conversation with Werner. Here, the setting and characters are introduced and the plot is set in motion. Act II consists of Pechorin's (successful) attempts to inspire a feeling of disdain—and thus fascination—for the character-Pechorin in Princess Mary ("My affairs have come on tremendously these last two days. Princess Mary positively hates me" (84) [В продолжение двух дней мои дела ужасно подвинулись. Княжна меня решительно ненавидит] (4:375)); as well as feelings of hope in Grushnitskii, whom he

[190] These terms are taken from Gustav Freytag's theory of the five-act play, which was first introduced in 1863 in *The Technique of Drama* (*Die Technik des Dramas*). However, the five-act structure was already well established as the standard format for serious dramas in the early 19th century.

encourages in his pursuit of the princess. This act includes the two "scripted" scenes related in the May 16th entry: the dialogue between Pechorin and Grushnitskii, and the encounter between all three *dramatis personae* on the road, when Pechorin startles Mary by galloping out of the brush in Circassian dress. (The entry also includes an unscripted scene – the encounter between Pechorin and Vera; we will have more to say about this below.) These scenes set the stage for Act III, the subscription ball. The ball concludes with a climactic scene in which Pechorin rescues Mary from the drunken advances of the dragoon captain's friend.[191] At this point, Mary's fascination with Pechorin turns firmly into attraction, and her interest in Grushnitskii begins to wane. While Pechorin could not have scripted the plot against Mary—which springs from an older society lady's jealousy and the dragoon captain's promise to "teach Mary a lesson" on her behalf—Pechorin was waiting for just such an opportunity to arise.[192] The rescue scene plays out precisely in accordance with Pechorin's wishes, as he indicates to Werner at the end of the May 22nd entry: "'Aha!' he said. 'So much for you! The man who wasn't going to meet the princess except by saving her from certain death!' 'I did better,' I said. 'I saved her from fainting at a ball'" (98) [— А-га! — сказал он, — так-то вы! А еще хотели не иначе знакомиться с княжной, как спасши ее от верной смерти. — Я сделал лучше, — отвечал я ему, — спас ее от обморока на бале!] (4:394). Pechorin cleverly follows this rescue with a revelation: he "lets slip" to Mary that Grushnitskii is a cadet [юнкер], dispelling her romantic illusion that Grushnitskii is an officer demoted for dueling.

Following the dramatic climax at the ball we enter Act IV, the falling action, in which Pechorin secures Mary's love for the character-Pechorin and her contempt for Grushnitskii. In this act the staging succeeds in following the script exactly, as it is Pechorin himself who steps forward as the primary actor. He reflects on the successful performance of his script in the entry from May 29th: "The last few days I've stuck firmly to my plan. Princess Mary is beginning to enjoy my conversation" (101) [Все эти дни я ни разу не отступил от своей системы. Княжне начинает нравиться мой разговор] (4:399). He goes on to reflect on his own performance: adopting an ironic stance toward everything; putting on a look of deference whenever Grushnitskii appears; purposely not speaking to the princess when she most desires his conversation. This performance culminates in the dramatic monologue that Pechorin delivers for Mary's benefit in the June 3rd entry, in which—"putting on a look of deep emotion" (106) [приняв глубоко тронутый вид] (4:405)—he describes his past life in vague Byronic terms.

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[191] Goscilo, following Nabokov, notes that the dragoon captain is a stock figure of comedy. His presence in "Princess Mary" indicates the influence of French comedy and vaudeville on the narrative, in addition to Schillerian tragedy. See Goscilo, "Stage and Page: Drama's Incursion into Russian Fiction of the 1830s," p. 101.

[192] Thus, while it is in one sense a lucky coincidence that Pechorin overhears precisely the information he needs in order to stage a heroic rescue, it matters that Pechorin is the type of person who listens in on other people's conversations in hopes of gleaning useful information. Engaged as he is in scripting and staging a drama based on the surrounding spa society, Pechorin is always on the lookout for bits of gossip that he might use. Robert Reid makes a similar point, noting that "although the instances of eavesdropping clearly are devices for securing information crucial in a first person narrative, they also serve a positive role at the characterizational level, since they indicate to us that the character concerned is precisely *the sort* of character who would eavesdrop." See Reid, *Lermontov's 'A Hero of Our Time*, pp. 8-9. In contrast to Reid's psychological interpretation of the novel's eavesdropping scenes, Todd views them as proof of the novel's inherent theatricality: "But when the characters use those eyes to keep each other under constant surveillance, to catch each other off guard, and to conceal emotion, the eyes become less a sign of romantic insight and more an indicator of a theatrically organized society in which each character becomes, in Zhukovsky's words, 'both actor and spectator.'" See Todd, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin*, pp. 152-53.

This speech falls firmly into the genre of dramatic monologue. Indeed, it is almost word for word the same speech that Aleksandr Radin delivers to Vera Ligovskaia—yet another prototype for the two central women in "Princess Mary"—in Act II, scene 1 of *Two Brothers*.[193] The first half of Pechorin's speech follows Aleksandr's monologue exactly, with only a few very minor alterations in phrasing:

Aleksandr Radin's dramatic monologue in *Two Brothers*:

Да! … такова была моя участь со дня рождения…все читали на моем лице какие-то признаки дурных свойств, которых не было…но их предполагали – и они родились. Я был скромен, меня бранили за лукавство – я стал скрытен. – Я глубоко чувствовал добро и зло – никто меня не ласкал – все оскорбляли – я стал злопамятен. Я был угрюм, – брат весел и открытен – я чувствовал себя выше его – меня ставили ниже – я сделался завистлив. – Я был готов любить весь мир – меня никто не любил – и я выучился ненавидеть… Моя бесцветная молодость протекла в борьбе с судьбой и светом. Лучшие мои чувства, боясь насмешки, я хоронил в глубину сердца…они там и умерли; я стал честолюбив, служил долго…меня обходили; я пустился в большой свет, сделался искусен в науке жизни – а видел, как другие без искусства счастливы: в груди моей возникло отчаяние, – не то, которое лечат дулом пистолета, но то отчаяние, которому нет лекарства ни в здешней ни в будущей жизни; наконец я сделал последнее усилие, – я решился узнать хоть раз, что значит быть любимым…и для этого избрал тебя! (3:505-506)

Yes! …That's been my lot from the day of my birth…everyone saw in my face some sort of evil traits that I didn't possess…but they assumed I did, and so they developed. I was modest, and was accused of being deceitful – so I kept to myself. I had a strong sense of good and evil – instead of kindness I received nothing but insults – so I grew resentful. I was sullen – my brother was gay and open – I felt superior to him, and was set beneath him – so I became jealous. I was ready to love the whole world, but no one loved me, so I learned to hate. I spent my blighted youth in conflict with fate and the world. Fearing ridicule, I hid my best feelings deep within me, and there they died; I became ambitious, served for a long time…I was passed over; I set out into the big world, became adept at the art of living – yet I saw that others were happy without that art: in my breast arose despair – not the despair you can cure with a pistol barrel, but that despair for which there is no medicine either in this life or the next; finally I made a last effort – I decided to find out even if only once what it means to be loved…and for this I chose you![194]

[193] Vladimir Levin discusses the critical reception of Pechorin's monologue, noting that, while Belinskii immediately recognized that Pechorin was putting on a pose, many subsequent scholars have taken Pechorin at his word, interpreting the monologue as a straightforward account of Pechorin's own personal history. See V. Levin, "Ob istinnom smysle monologa Pechorina," *Tvorchestvo M. Iu. Lermontova: 150 let so dnia rozhdeniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), pp. 276-282. Surprisingly, few analyses of the monologue mention that Lermontov lifted the speech from his own 1836 play.

[194] All translations from *Two Brothers* are my own. In this case I have chosen to adopt the same language used in Paul Foote's translation of *A Hero of Our Time* wherever there is a direct overlap between Aleksandr Radin's monologue and Pechorin's.

Pechorin's monologue in the June 3rd entry of "Princess Mary":

— Да, такова была моя участь с самого детства. Все читали на моем лице признаки дурных чувств, которых не было; но их предполагали – и они родились. Я был скромен – меня обвиняли в лукавстве: я стал скрытен. Я глубоко чувствовал добро и зло; никто меня не ласкал, все оскорбляли: я стал злопамятен; я был угрюм, — другие дети веселы и болтливы; я чувствовал себя выше их, — меня ставили ниже. Я сделался завистлив. Я был готов любить весь мир, — меня никто не понял: и я выучился ненавидеть. Моя бесцветная молодость протекала в борьбе с собой и светом; лучшие мои чувства, боясь насмешки, я хоронил в глубине сердца: они там и умерли. Я говорил правду — мне не верили: я начал обманывать; узнав хорошо свет и пружины общества, я стал искусен в науке жизни и видел, как другие без искусства счастливы, пользуясь даром теми выгодами, которых я так неутомимо добивался. И тогда в груди моей родилось отчаяние — не то отчаяние, которое лечат дулом пистолета, но холодное, бессильное отчаяние, прикрытое любезностью и добродушной улыбкой. Я сделался нравственным калекой: одна половина души моей не существовала, она высохла, испарилась, умерла, я ее отрезал и бросил […] (4:405)

Yes, that's been my lot ever since I was a boy. Everyone saw in my face evil traits that I didn't possess. But they assumed I did, and so they developed. I was modest, and was accused of being deceitful, so I kept to myself. I had a strong sense of good and evil; instead of kindness I received nothing but insults, so I grew resentful. I was sullen, while other children were gay and talkative. I felt superior to them, and was set beneath them, so I became jealous. I was ready to love the whole world, but no one understood me, so I learned to hate. I spent my blighted youth in conflict with myself and the world. Fearing ridicule, I hid my best feelings deep within me, and there they died. I spoke the truth, but no one believed me, so I took to deceit. Knowing the world and the mainsprings of society, I became adept at the art of living. Yet I saw that others were happy without that art, enjoying for nothing the advantages I'd worked so hard to gain. That led me to despair, not the despair you can cure with a pistol barrel, but a cold, impotent despair that hid behind an affable exterior and a genial smile. I became a moral cripple. One half of my soul had ceased to exist. It had withered and died, so I cut it off and cast it away […] (106)

The two monologues are virtually identical right up until their respective conclusions. Whereas Aleksandr closes his speech by telling Vera that the only recourse left to him in his despair was to discover what it means to be loved by her, Pechorin ends his monologue with the famous line about his split soul, the better half of which is now dead and buried. Like Aleksandr, however, Pechorin goes on to suggest that his interlocutor is the only person capable of resurrecting his better nature: he tells Mary that she has conjured up the memory of his soul's dead half. Through this speech, Pechorin places Mary in the same role occupied by many of Lermontov's heroines, including Vera Ligovskaia in *Two Brothers* and Nina Arbenina in *Masquerade*: that of the gentle, beautiful woman whose love temporarily redeems the demonic hero. The difference is that Pechorin delivers this monologue intentionally and self-consciously, knowing that it will appeal to Mary, who longs to play the role of romantic heroine. Aleksandr's speech is a genuine

reflection of his feelings, and Vera responds with pity, fear, and disgust. Pechorin-the-character delivers the same speech as part of a script devised by Pechorin-the-director, a script which Mary is unknowingly following.[195]

With this monologue, Pechorin cements Mary's love for himself and destroys her interest in Grushnitskii once and for all. Act V—the denouement, or *развязка*—of Pechorin's play is the second ball, described in the entry from June 5th, at which Mary publicly spurns Grushnitskii in favor of Pechorin despite Grushnitskii's new officer's epaulettes. Within the larger dramatic structure of "Princess Mary" this scene is the climax: it sets in motion the plot against Pechorin, which in turn culminates in Grushnitskii's death. Within Pechorin's own script, however, it is the *denouement*. Pechorin has not planned beyond this point: the goal of all his machinations was to create a love triangle in which Mary, at first enamored of Grushnitskii—the false Romantic hero—would abandon this flirtation in favor of the character-Pechorin, the true Romantic hero. At the ball, all is revealed: Mary makes her disdain for Grushnitskii clear, and the character-Pechorin makes equally clear his intentions toward Mary, crushing Grushnitskii's hopes once and for all.

In the manner of a dramatic *razviazka* (literally "untying"), all the threads of the preceding plot action are undone as the true relations between the three *dramatis personae* are revealed. Significantly, Pechorin himself thinks of this moment as a *denouement*. Recounting his thoughts as he parted with the naively hopeful Grushnitskii just an hour or so before the ball, Pechorin writes,

> Is it my sole function in life, I thought, to be the ruin of other people's hopes? Through all my active life fate always seems to have brought me in for the *denouement* of other people's dramas. As if nobody could die or despair without my help. I've been the indispensable figure of the fifth act, thrust into the pitiful role of executioner or betrayer. What was fate's purpose? (110)
>
> Неужели, думал я, мое единственное назначение на земле – разрушать чужие надежды? С тех пор как я живу и действую, судьба как-то всегда приводила меня к развязке чужих драм, как будто без меня никто не мог бы ни умереть, ни прийти в отчаяние! Я был необходимое лицо пятого акта; невольно я разыгрывал жалкую роль палача или предателя. Какую цель имела на это судьба? (4:411)

This passage is striking for a number of reasons. First, it suggests that the genre of Pechorin's play is ultimately tragedy. It is a five-act drama that culminates in ruin and despair. Moreover, this ruin is imagined here in the manner of classical tragedy as a divine or preordained punishment. The object of this punishment is Grushnitskii. It is Grushnitskii whose hopes will be ruined in the *denouement*, whose illusions—about himself, about his friend and confidant Pechorin, and about his beloved Mary—will be shattered. The question arises as to *why* Pechorin is so determined to punish Grushnitskii. The answer is twofold: first, because he is bored; and

[195] What is left ambiguous is the extent to which the adopted role accurately reflects Pechorin's own moral deadness. The narrative leaves open the possibility that Pechorin is essentially playing himself. The dividing line between self (Pechorin-the-dramatist) and role (Pechorin-the-character) is constantly blurred, making it impossible to ever fully locate the "authentic" self behind the Byronic pose.

second, because he dislikes in Grushnitskii precisely those weaknesses he fears he himself may share.

Most significant of all, however, is the fact that Pechorin relinquishes authorship at a critical moment in the drama he has spent the past three weeks painstakingly scripting and staging. In blaming the *denouement* of this drama on fate, Pechorin steps back from taking responsibility for his own script. As we have seen, Pechorin prepared the fifth act of this drama himself. He knowingly cast himself in the role of the true Romantic hero, whose noble sufferings lead him unwittingly to the destruction of himself and those around him, and Grushnitskii and Mary in the role of his victims. The implied final scene in this fifth act is not played out, derailed as it is by Pechorin's own unexpectedly genuine feelings of tenderness toward Mary and his realization that a plot is mobilizing against him, to say nothing of the unscripted appearance of Vera. Yet we can suppose that this final scene—the vaguely imagined conclusion to Pechorin's script—must have involved the hero's abandonment of Mary and Mary's own fall into despair. (A version of this scene is played out belatedly in the final diary entry, though at that point intervening events have changed circumstances too much for Pechorin's script to hold.) It is clear that Pechorin does not intend to marry the princess or even to compromise her: his only object is to make her abandon her naïve attraction to Grushnitskii and to fall in love with him—or rather, with the character he is playing. Thus, by the end of the June 5th entry, one final scene remains in the fifth act of Pechorin's drama: the betrayal of Mary, which in Pechorin's original conception must have followed soon after the triumph over Grushnitskii. As we have seen, Pechorin has cast Mary in the role of angelic savior to his demonic hero; and in Lermontov's dramas, such heroes always destroy the woman they profess to love. In the final analysis, then, both Mary and Grushnitskii are to be punished, for their naivety and their continued adherence to the Romantic tropes that Pechorin himself has long since dismissed as ridiculous.

In the June 5th entry, Pechorin retroactively tries to "rewrite" this fifth act retribution as the result of fate rather than the self-destructiveness of the Romantic hero (the character-Pechorin). In doing so, he fundamentally reimagines his own script. The drama shifts from the realm of Romantic tragedy—such as that which might have been written by Schiller, or by Lermontov himself—to classical tragedy. While it is difficult to invoke categories such as "Romantic" and "classical" tragedy without immediately falling into generalizations, I am relying primarily upon Schiller's dramas and theoretical tracts, which Lermontov certainly read[196], and on Lermontov's own dramas for my characterization of Romantic (modern) tragedy,

[196] See Eikhenbaum, "Piat' redaktsii 'Maskarada'": "One can be sure that, while working on his dramas, Lermontov read not only Schiller's tragedies, but also his famous theoretical treatises: 'On the tragic in art,' 'On the pathetic,' 'On the sublime'" [Можно быть уверенным, что, работая над своими драмами, Лермонтов читал не только трагедии Шиллера, но и его знаменитые теоретические трактаты: «О трагическом в искусстве», «О патетическом», «О возвышенном»] (translation mine). Along with *The Robbers* and *Intrigue and Love*, many of Schiller's theoretical writings appeared in Russian translation in the early 1800s and exercised significant influence over Russian sentimentalism and Decembrism in the 1810s and 20s. For a detailed discussion of Schiller's reception by proto-Decembrist writers and thinkers, see Tat'iana Mikhailovna Rodina, *Russkoe teatral'noe iskusstvo v nachale XIX veka* (Moscow: Iz'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1961). When it comes to Schiller's plays, Lermontov was most clearly influenced by *The Robbers* (which he saw performed in Moscow in 1829), *Intrigue and Love* (which appeared in Moscow in 1827 starring Mochalov), and *Don Carlos*. See Edmund Kostka, "Lermontov's Debt to Schiller," *Revue de Litterature Comparee* 37 (1963), pp. 68-88. Interestingly, Kostka also draws a parallel between the title of *Two Brothers* and *Die feindlichen Bruder* (*The Enemy Brothers*), the original title of *The Bride of Messina*. *The Bride of Messina* belongs to the genre of the *Schicksalstragödie* (German fate tragedy) and represents a departure from Schiller's usual commitment to character tragedy in favor of a Sophoclean fate drama modeled in part on *Oedipus Tyrannus*. For an overview of the genre of the *Schicksalstragödie* and a discussion of Schiller's

and on the German Romantic understanding of Sophoclean fate dramas for my characterization of classical tragedy.[197] In Romantic tragedy, broadly speaking, the tragic *denouement* is unwittingly caused by the hero himself, through the collision between his personality and the force of social repression, or through his own inherent self-destructiveness. The hero retains our sympathy because of his strength and nobility and because, crucially, he causes evil against his own will. As Schiller writes in "On Tragic Art," "Pity [the enjoyment of which is the basis of tragedy] is far more excited when it has for its object both him who suffers and him who is the primary cause of the suffering."[198] This can only be achieved when the individual who is the primary cause of the tragic *denouement* is not an instrument of fate—a self-righteous enactor of justice like the Stranger [Neizvestnyi] in *Masquerade*—but rather a complex individual who possesses both good and evil impulses and who is finally led to evil by circumstances outside of his control. Eikhenbaum argues that this is precisely the conception of tragedy toward which Lermontov, inspired by Schiller, was drawn. As Eikhenbaum demonstrates, the Stranger who appears in Act IV of *Masquerade* to punish Arbenin is an anomaly that Lermontov was forced to include in an effort to get the play past the censors, a role "clearly not included in Lermontov's original plan" [явно не входившая в первоначальный план Лермонтова].[199] Much more

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attempt to reconcile "human responsibility and freedom on the one hand, and fatal activity on the other" in *The Bride of Messina*, see Bruce Thompson, "The Limitations of Freedom: A Comparative Study of Schiller's 'Die Braut von Messina' and Werner's 'Der 24te Februar,'" *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (April 1978), pp. 328-336. For a further discussion of the play's engagement with *Oedipus* and its status as a fate (rather than character) tragedy, see G.A. Wells, "Fate-tragedy and Schiller's *Die Braut von Messina*," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (April 1965), pp. 191-212. Wells points out that the existence of blind fate does not "in any way accord with Schiller's theory of tragedy." Wells, p. 191.

[197] Greek tragedy held a privileged position in the aesthetic theories of the German Idealists, including Schiller, the Schlegel brothers, Schelling, and Hegel. Joshua Billings points out that "Idealist thinkers understand Greek tragedy to represent a distinctive form of human freedom, and to crystallize issues of agency and subjectivity that are central to their own philosophical inquiries." Billings goes on to note that the conceptualization of Greek tragedy upon which the German thinkers based their theories was both limited and, in many cases, heavily Christianized. Schiller, Schelling, and A.W. Schlegel all took Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* as the quintessential Greek tragedy; when they talk about "classical tragedy," they are really talking about *Oedipus*. Thus, the theory of heroic tragedy that Schiller develops in "On Tragic Art" [Über die tragische Kunst] (1792), "On the Pathetic" [Über das Pathetische] (1793), and "On the Sublime" [Über das Erhabene] (1794-96) takes *Oedipus Tyrannus* – probably the most extreme example of blind fate in Greek drama – as its model of fate tragedy. See Joshua Billings, *A Genealogy of the Tragic: Greek Tragedy and German Philosophy around 1800* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2014). For a further discussion of German Idealism's over-generalizing and Christianizing approach to Greek tragedy, see Simon Goldhill, "The Ends of Tragedy: Schelling, Hegel, and Oedipus," *PMLA* Vol. 129, No. 4, Special Topic: Tragedy (October 2014), pp. 634-648.

[198] The full quote is as follows: "A poet who understands his real interest will not bring about the catastrophe through a malicious will which proposes misfortune as its end; nor, and still less, by want of understanding: but rather through the imperious force of circumstances. If this catastrophe does not come from moral sources, but from outward things, which have no volition and are not subject to any will, the pity we experience is more pure, or at all events it is not weakened by any idea of moral incongruity. But then the spectator cannot be spared the disagreeable feeling of an incongruity in the order of nature, which can alone save in such a case moral propriety. Pity is far more excited when it has for its object both him who suffers and him who is the primary cause of the suffering. This can only happen when the latter has neither elicited our contempt nor our hatred, but when he has been brought against his inclination to become the cause of this misfortune." See Friedrich von Schiller, "On Tragic Art," *Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1875), p. 347.

[199] See Eikhenbaum, "Piat' redaktsii 'Maskarada.'" The original three-act version of the play closes with Arbenin gloating over the dead Nina, still unaware of her innocence. Lermontov added the fourth act, in which the mysterious Stranger reveals Arbenin's fatal mistake and Arbenin falls into a catatonic stupor, only after the censors rejected the three-act version. The amendment wasn't enough for the censors; *Masquerade*, like all of Lermontov's

characteristic of Lermontov's approach to tragedy in his mature dramas is the sympathy we are made to feel for Arbenin and even for Aleksandr Radin through their dramatic monologues and soliloquies. These moments of performative introspection—whether couched in metaphysical terms as a battle between good and evil, as in *Masquerade*, or in more psychological ones, as in *Two Brothers*—reveal that these characters are led to evil acts through despair over a conflict between their own will and the circumstances of their birth, bad character, and/or social position.

This is not to say that Arbenin and Aleksandr Radin do not emerge as villains – they clearly do. Arbenin's pride leads him to poison his innocent wife, and jealousy and spite drive Aleksandr (who has more in common with Franz than Karl Moore) to destroy any hope for happiness for his aging father, his brother Yurii, or Vera Ligovskaia, the woman he purports to love. Yet both figures are presented against the backdrop of cruel, unjust societies, and their strength, willpower, and originality make them objects of sympathy as well as objects of scorn. Arbenin is confronted with gamblers who cheat and manipulate the cards rather than embracing chance, and with a society so adept at donning masks that they are perfectly at home at a masquerade ball[200]; he responds by giving up gambling and refusing to wear a mask to the masquerade, stating at the beginning of Act I, scene 2, "Why am I seeking entertainment in the crowd? / It's dazzling and it's buzzing all around… / My heart stays cold, and dormant is my fancy range: / They all are alien to me, to all of them I'm strange!"[201] [Напрасно я ищу повсюду развлеченья. / Пестреет и жужжит толпа передо мной… / Но сердце холодно, и спит воображенье: / Они все чужды мне, и я им всем чужой!] (3:363). Arbenin's strength of will earns the audience's admiration, and although he himself causes his own tragic downfall, he retains our sympathy, precisely in the manner outlined by Schiller in "On Tragic Art" and elaborated in "On the Sublime."

Up until the June 5th entry, Pechorin has cast himself in a role similar to that of Lermontov's own mature tragic heroes, and Mary in the role of a Vera Ligovskaia or Nina Arbenina (a role she clearly embraces, though seemingly without understanding that it belongs to the genre of tragedy). Pechorin's proclamation that he has been designated by fate as the "indispensable figure of the fifth act" in other people's dramas—essentially aligning himself with the Stranger [Neizvestnyi] of *Masquerade* rather than Arbenin—marks a moment of powerful self-deception that is especially ironic in light of Lermontov's own critical views on fate in fifth-act retribution. In naming fate as the organizing principle in a drama that has only ever depended upon Pechorin's own will, Pechorin attempts not only to enact a last-minute change in genre (from Romantic to classical tragedy) but also to relinquish his position as writer-director and to merge with the character he has been playing. Rather than Pechorin-the-dramatist directing the actions of Pechorin-the-character, Pechorin now reimagines both of these selves as the same self: Pechorin-the-instrument-of-fate, guided over the past three weeks by predestination.

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dramas, was first staged only decades after his death. This degree of censorship was typical of the period. Beginning in 1828, dramatic works were subjected to the so-called "two-stage" censorship, according to which a questionable play faced consideration by both the general censors and the Third Department, the tsarist secret police. For an in-depth discussion of theatrical censorship in the 19th century, see Al'tshuller, *Teatr proslavlennykh masterov: Ocherki istorii Aleksandrinskoi stseny*, Ch. 1.

[200] Vladimir Golstein discusses the ways in which Lermontov contrasts Arbenin's strength of will with the petty and manipulative societies of the gambling hall and the masquerade. See Golstein, *Lermontov's Narratives of Heroism*, Chapter Three: Temptations of a Gnostic Outlook (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1999).

[201] All translations from *Masquerade* are by Alfred Karpovich, *The Masquerade: A Poetic Drama in Four Acts* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2013).

Significantly, it is at this point in the narrative that Pechorin's drama comes to an end. The second half of "Princess Mary" is made up of unscripted events. For all that Pechorin continues to eavesdrop, to manipulate those around him, and to speak in theatrical metaphors ('*Finita la commedia*'), the plot action from this point forward has slipped largely outside of Pechorin's control. The affair with Vera, which has interfered with Pechorin's calculated scripting from the beginning by genuinely engaging his feelings, begins to occupy more narrative space. Pechorin's behavior toward Mary wavers between sticking to the established pose—there is something undeniably calculating in his tender gestures and cold silence during the June 12th horseback riding scene—and a newfound impulsivity. In the entry from June 6th, immediately following the *denouement* at the ball, Pechorin finds himself disturbed by Mary's illness and wonders if he has fallen in love in spite of himself: "I reached home with the feeling that something was missing. *I hadn't seen her*. *She's ill*. Perhaps I've fallen in love myself? What nonsense!" (114) [Возвратясь домой, я заметил, что мне чего-то недостает. *Я не видал ее! Она больна!* Уж не влюбился ли я в самом деле?…Какой вздор!] (4:415). Pechorin's use of italicization to indicate the thoughts going through his mind at the moment he was experiencing the narrated events—as opposed to his retrospective thoughts as he records these events in his diary—is unique to the June 6th entry. Italics are not used in this way anywhere else in Pechorin's journal. Their appearance here marks a change in how Pechorin narrates himself: this is the beginning of a shift away from Pechorin's self-conception as the simultaneous director of, and actor in, a society drama of his own making, toward a more genuinely diaristic, and thus novelistic, self-image.

The remaining diary entries that are written simultaneously as the action unfolds—everything up until the latter two-thirds of the entry marked June 16th, which are written retrospectively from the fort at N.—depict Pechorin as someone who is often unsure of himself, who is no longer commited to the role he has been playing, and who is suddenly far more anxious over the possibility that his actions have been predetermined by fate. It is as though, in surrendering authorship over his script to the guiding force of fate in the June 5th entry, Pechorin commits himself to bowing to that force for the remainder of the diary. In the entry for June 14th Pechorin remembers having his fortune read as a child and the fortune-teller's prediction that he will die "through a bad wife" [смерть от злой жены]. In the June 16th entry, Pechorin attributes his habit of lucky eavesdropping to fate: "Grushnitsky was there, and once again I was destined to overhear a conversation which was to settle his fate" (127) [Судьба вторично доставила мне случай подслушать разговор, который должен был решить […] участь [Грушницкого]] (4:432). Although this is the third time Pechorin has happened to conveniently overhear an important conversation in "Princess Mary," this is the first time he ascribes the overhearing to fate. Finally, in a famous passage from later in the June 16th entry, Pechorin once again muses on his position as a fatal instrument in the hands of destiny: "How many times since then have I been the axe in the hands of fate? Like an engine of execution, I've descended on the heads of the destined victims, often without malice, but always without pity" (131) [И с той поры сколько раз уже я играл роль топора в руках судьбы! Как орудие казни, я упадал на голову обреченных жертв, часто без злобы, всегда без сожаления] (4:438). By the end of "Princess Mary," Pechorin has given himself over fully to the idea of fate, which he first embraced as a way out of authorial responsibility in the entry from June 5th.

As we shall see below, these changes in Pechorin's self-conception are accompanied by two significant stylistic changes: first, a shift toward longer, less controlled, less performative self-reflective passages in the diary entries; and second, an increasing focus on physicality and

unscripted (i.e., unintentional) bodily responses. In other words, the two theatrical conventions that Lermontov employs in the earlier sections of "Princess Mary" to characterize his hero and access his interiority—dramatic monologue/soliloquy and the successful reading and implementation of dramatic gestures—are turned on their heads in the narrative's latter sections, as Lermontov moves away from dramatic models and toward novelistic ones.

Let us turn first to the self-reflective passages. Broadly speaking, Pechorin's diary entries in "Princess Mary" are made up of three types of discourse: narration of the unfolding action ("scenes"); assessment of other individuals' motives and character (such as his dispassionate characterization of Grushnitskii in the May 11th entry or of Werner in the entry from May 13th); and introspective passages. These moments of self-reflection are short at first, a paragraph at most, and appear like asides to the audience as Pechorin scripts and stages his play. "Audience" is precisely the right word here. While Pechorin is ostensibly writing this journal for himself and is unaware of its double readership—both the implied homodiegetic readers of the journal sections published by the frame narrator, and us, the heterodiegetic readers of Lermontov's novel—there is a dramatic, performative quality to these passages that implies an audience. The form and content of these introspective sections is similar to that of Arbenin's soliloquies and asides in *Masquerade* or those of Aleksandr in *Two Brothers*. The lines in these dramas that are spoken "to the side" [в сторону], "to oneself" [про себя], or simply delivered while the character is alone on stage, reveal guilt and inner conflict as well as the character's scheming intentions, all of which must be presented in the form of a soliloquy or an aside in order to give the audience insight into the inner lives of these secretive *dramatis personae*.[202]

For example, in *Masquerade* Arbenin often addresses self-reflective utterances to himself, as in Act I, scene 3, when he is sitting alone in his bedroom waiting for Nina to return: "Oh, God is just; it is my doom / To bear the woes of the gone-by days, / For all my sins I have to face / The ugly shadows of atonement gloom" [Бог справедлив! и я теперь едва ли / Не осужден нести печали / За все грехи минувших дней…] (3:378). Such melancholic, semi-confessional statements about Arbenin's past, his aversion to the *beau monde*, and his spiritual dependence on Nina's love are constant throughout *Masquerade*, and it is thanks to these asides and occasional longer soliloquies that the audience is able to maintain sympathy for the hero. Though the speaker is supposedly addressing himself, the nature of dramatic utterance means that these asides are also obviously spoken aloud for the benefit of the audience, whose implied presence is felt even when we read the play on the page. In Aleksandr's soliloquies in *Two Brothers*, a play much more concerned with psychological motivation than *Masquerade*, the introspective, confessional impulse is felt even more strongly:

> Yes, I am 30 years old…and what have I done; why have I lived? …They say that I am an egotist; so then, I've lived for myself? …No…I have denied myself in everything, have always been a silent victim of other people's whims, have always struggled against my passions, never sought any pleasure, was a burden to myself – I never even intentionally caused anyone evil…So then, I have lived for others? – also no…I have never caused anyone good, fearing to meet ingratitude, I despised fools, feared the intelligent, was far removed from everyone, did not care about anyone – alone, always

[202] Elizabeth Burns characterizes soliloquies as "revelations of protagonists…thoughts which the spectator overhears." See Burns, *Theatricality: A Study of Convention in the Theatre and in Social Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 167.

> alone, rejected like Cain […] Why is it that I can never forget myself? Why do I read my own soul like an open book?
>
> Да, мне 30 лет…а что я сделал; зачем жил? …говорят, что я эгоист; итак, я жил для себя? …Нет…я во всем себе отказывал, вечно был молчаливой жертвой чужих прихотей, вечно боролся с своими страстями, не искал никаких наслаждений, был сам себе в тягость – даже зла никому умышленно не сделал…Итак я жил для других? – также нет…я никому не делал добра, боясь встретить неблагодарность, презирал глупцов, боялся умных, был далек от всех, не заботился ни о ком – один, всегда один, отверженный как Каин […] Отчего я никогда не могу забыться? Отчего я читаю в душе своей, как в открытой книге? (3:521-522)

Aleksandr's long soliloquy at the beginning of Act IV, in which he compares his own alienation to that of Cain, renders him at least somewhat sympathetic to the audience and provides psychological justification for his actions in the play. His self-assessment, including his claim that he has inherited a bad character and that he is cursed with acute self-awareness, prefigure many of Pechorin's own statements.

The soliloquies and asides in *Masquerade* and *Two Brothers* possess an inherently confessional, performative quality, despite the contrivance that they are merely the character's own thoughts spoken aloud. An analogous effect is achieved in first-person novelistic discourse whose purported author is motivated by guilt or the urge to confess.[203] The early self-reflective passages in the diary entries of "Princess Mary" follow precisely this pattern. It is as though Pechorin is as determined to convince his diary's implied reader of a certain pose as he is to convince Princess Mary. Many of the early introspective passages are dedicated to performative self-definition; in this way they are not unlike the dramatic monologue Pechorin delivers to Mary in the June 3rd entry. Consider the following remarks, each of which is taken from a different self-reflective passage in the first half of the narrative: "I was born with a passion for contradiction. My whole life has been nothing but a series of dismal, unsuccessful attempts to go against heart or reason" (77) [У меня врожденная страсть противоречить; целая моя жизнь была только цепь грустных и неудачных противоречий сердцу или рассудку] (4:365; May 11th entry); "It's silly the way I'm made: I forget nothing – absolutely nothing" (83) [я глупо создан: ничего не забываю –ничего!] (4:374; May 13th); "Enjoy myself! I've passed that stage in life when all one seeks is happiness and when the heart feels the need to love someone with passion and intensity" (88) [Весело! …Да, я уже прошел тот период жизни душевной, когда ищут только счастия, когда сердце чувствует необходимость любить сильно и страстно кого-нибудь] (4:381; May 16th); "I really can't think why she is so fond of me, especially since she's the only woman who's ever understood me and all my petty weaknesses and unhealthy passions. Can evil be so attractive?" (101) [За что она меня так любит, право, не знаю! Тем более, что это одна женщина, которая меня поняла совершенно, со всеми моими мелкими слабостями, дурными страстями…Неужели зло так привлекательно?] (4:398; May 23rd);

[203] In a 1986 article on Sinclair Ross' *As For Me and My House*, Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen make a similar point, arguing that a "major characteristic of such narratives is that they stand mid-way between private and public 'confessional' literature, between interior monologue and written articulation; in dramatic monologue an audience is assumed/implied, with the narrative consequently taking the form of the narrator's attempt convincingly to present a case" (101). See "Who's the Father of Mrs. Bentley's Child? 'As For Me and My House' and the Conventions of Dramatic Monologue," *Canadian Literature* 111 (1986), pp. 101-113.

"I've an insatiable craving inside me that consumes everything and makes me regard the sufferings and joys of others only in their relationship to me, as food to sustain my spiritual powers […] my chief delight is to dominate those around me" (103) [Я чувствую в себе эту ненасытную жадность, поглощающую все, что встречается на пути; я смотрю на страдания и радости других только в отношении к себе, как на пищу, поддерживающую мои душевные силы […] первое мое удовольствие – подчинять моей воле все, что меня окружает] (4:401; June 3rd). The feelings and impulses Pechorin articulates in these passages are perhaps more original than the ones he offers in his Byronic speech to Mary, but they are not substantively different, and they engage in the same performative project of self-identification. Moreover, there is something inherently suspect about the implicit juxtaposition between Pechorin's overt role-playing in public and the supposed "authenticity" of these private moments of introspection. After numerous demonstrations of Pechorin's skill at wearing masks, how is the reader meant to take him at his word when he claims, "I'm accustomed to be frank with myself" (77) [привык себе во всем признаваться] (4:365)? If the narrated events in the diary entries are organized into "scenes," then these moments of introspection represent performative utterances akin to the soliloquy and the aside.

The self-reflective impulse persists in the later "Princess Mary" entries as well. However, in the wake of the June 5th *denouement* at the ball these introspective passages gradually become longer and take on a new sense of urgency which does not feel wholly performative. For example, the entry from June 14th is devoted entirely to self-analysis. This analysis quickly devolves into a series of questions that Pechorin appears unable to answer: "Why do I value [my freedom] so much? What use is it to me? What am I preparing myself for? What do I expect from the future? In fact, nothing at all" (123) [Отчего я так дорожу [своей свободой]? что мне в ней? …куда я себя готовлю? чего я жду от будущего? …Право, ровно ничего] (4:427-428). The rapid posing of these questions one after the other and the unsatisfactory response that follows reflect a new tone in Pechorin's self-contemplation, one marked by uncertainty and agitation.

Significantly, the longest self-reflective passage in the diary appears in the entry for June 16th. This passage is written at two in the morning the night before Pechorin's duel with Grushnitskii and is characterized by a genuine sense of immediacy. There is still a tendency toward dramatic utterances—"There must have been some purpose, I must have had some high object in life, for I feel unbounded strength within me. But I never discovered it and was carried away by the allurements of empty, unrewarding passions" (131) [А, верно, она [цель, для которой я родился] существовала, и, верно, было мне назначение высокое, потому что я чувствую в душе моей силы необъятные…Но я не угадал этого назначения, я увлекся приманками страстей пустых и неблагодарных] (4:438)—but now these statements are tempered by more urgent, less blatantly performative scribblings. Pechorin imagines that he is speaking directly to Grushnitskii and plays out a confrontation as he pictures it unfolding, using the present tense and direct second person address: "Ah, Grushnitsky, your ruse won't work. The roles will be reversed […] Why did you choose these fatal six paces? Do you think I'll meekly be your target? Oh no, we'll draw lots and then…then…What if your luck holds out against mine?" (131) [А! господин Грушницкий! ваша мистификация вам не удастся…мы поменяемся ролями […] Зачем вы сами назначили эти роковые шесть шагов? Вы думаете, что я вам без спора подставлю свой лоб…но мы бросим жребий!…и тогда…тогда…что, если его счастье перетянет?] (4:437). The repeated ellipses add to the impression of immediacy, the sense that Pechorin is hastily writing these lines as they flash across his mind. In

spite of the grandiloquence of some of the phrases in this passage, the overall effect is much closer to written, diaristic language than any of Pechorin's earlier self-reflective utterances, which give the impression of scriptedness. At this point in the narrative, Pechorin has lost some (though certainly not all, as is clear from his manipulation of Grushnitskii during the duel) of his initial control over both the unfolding events and his own role in them.

Interestingly, there is relatively little extended self-reflection in the second half of the June 16th entry, the portion written retrospectively from the fort at N. This section of "Princess Mary" is fundamentally different from the preceding sections. It is closer to the discourse of a first-person novelistic hero than to the conventions of the diary form or the dramatic monologue or soliloquy. Pechorin narrates the events and his participation in them from a distance of six weeks. One of the necessary consequences of this temporal distance is that it becomes impossible to read Pechorin as engaging with the narrated events either as a "director" or as an "actor" in the same way he does in the earlier diary entries. This section shows Pechorin fully and consciously stepping into the role of executioner—the "indispensable figure of the fifth act"—as he devises a moral test for Grushtniskii ("I wanted to test him. He might show a spark of decency after all, and then all would be well" (137) [я хотел испытать его; в душе его могла проснуться искра великодушия, и тогда все устроилось бы к лучшему] (4:447)), the failure of which leads to Grushnitskii's violent death at Pechorin's own hands. Pechorin at last realizes the role that he saw himself as destined to play in the June 5th entry: the fifth-act executioner, the fatal judge in another person's drama. And yet the sudden switch to retrospective narration compromises our faith in Pechorin's characterization of his role in the action, prompting us to question whether Pechorin may have manipulated events in his telling of them. After all, the intervening six weeks mean that Pechorin has had time to reflect on what happened and for his interpretation of events to crystalize into a set narrative. Already determined to view himself as the "indispensable figure of the fifth act," has Pechorin mapped this predetermined outcome back onto the plot action as he narrates it? Moreover, with the loss of the simultaneity of the diary-drama form comes the loss of Pechorin's introspection: there are very few self-reflective utterances in this section of the text. Instead, Pechorin narrates himself retroactively as he might narrate a character in a novel.

In addition to a shift in the way "Princess Mary" depicts Pechorin's interiority, there is also a change in the second half of the text in the representation of the various characters' corporeality, with a gradually increasing focus placed on physicality and the body. Specifically, the later diary entries catalogue aspects of bodily experience that can be thought of as "non-performative" – as lacking that "consciousness of doubleness, through which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action" which Richard Bauman identifies as fundamental to performance. Non-performative in this case also means unscripted: these are bodily responses (mostly Pechorin's, but also Mary's and Vera's) which are unauthorized, which fall outside the purview of Pechorin's script.

In the June 7th entry, for example, Pechorin interprets Mary's behavior for the first time as entirely uncalculated: she trembles, cries, and is pale – "One hand, trembling slightly, rested on the back of an armchair. Her charming face looked matt and pale […] Tears filled her eyes, and, covering her face, she sank into the chair" (114) [Тусклая бледность покрывала милое лицо княжны. Она стояла у фортепьяно, опершись одной рукой на спинку кресел: эта рука чуть-чуть дрожала […] глаза наполнились слезами; она опустилась в кресла и закрыла лицо руками] (4:415-416). Despite the melodramatic language, this description differs from

Mary's earlier behavior, which was always carefully measured and calculated to produce a certain effect. From her very first appearance in the narrative Mary has followed a social script – one which was being carefully nurtured and manipulated by Pechorin, but which Mary herself chose to adopt. At the gatherings at the Ligovskoi home earlier in the story, Mary is languid and cool, knowing that this is the pose in which she is most attractive: "Once or twice Princess Mary was inclined to laugh as well, but controlled herself in order to keep up the pose she has adopted. She thinks that languor suits her, and she may well be right" (99) [княжне также не раз хотелось похохотать, но она удерживалась, чтоб не выйти из принятой роли; она находит, что томность к ней идет, —и, может быть, не ошибается] (4:395). Pechorin likes this pose and uses it to his advantage in staging the various scenes of his drama. Following the June 5th *denouement*, he is distressed by Mary's increasingly unperformative—unscripted—behavior. Immediately after the June 7th meeting with the princess, Pechorin is disturbed enough that he feels compelled to walk around the neighborhood to the point of physical exhaustion.

The later diary entries reveal that Pechorin seeks relief from acutely painful emotional experiences by engaging in intense physical activity, usually walking or horseback riding. These scenes of physical exertion are marked by an unusual number of references to embodied experience for a novel that typically glosses over such details. The early diary entries emphasize movement and gestures in the manner of a script or a director's notes blocking out a scene. They tell us where the various characters are positioned in relation to one another, what gestures they use to send nonverbal signals or to accompany their lines of dialogue, and the effect they achieve by adopting a certain stance or tone of voice. But subjective physical sensations—pain, exhaustion, somatic anxiety—are not described, nor are signs of their presence—trembling, paleness, nervous energy—noted by Pechorin in his account of the other characters' behavior. The only exception is Vera, whose involuntary physical responses are catalogued from the beginning. As we have already observed, Vera enters the narrative outside of Pechorin's script and does not occupy a role in the drama he is staging.[204] Moreover, her illness (tuberculosis) means that her own body is not entirely hers to control. She is prone to fever and exhaustion, which intensify her physical reactions to the unexpected meeting with Pechorin in Piatigorsk: "I clasped her tight in my arms, and so we stayed for a long time, till in the end our lips came close and met in a thrilling, passionate kiss. Her hands were like ice, her head was burning" (88) [Я её крепко обнял, и так мы оставались долго. Наконец губы наши сблизились и слились в жаркий, упоительный поцелуи; её руки были холодны как лед, голова горела] (4:380). It is telling that Vera, the only character in "Princess Mary" who is unscripted from the beginning, is also the only character at the spa who is truly ill. Nearly all of the non-performative, unauthorized bodily sensations and responses that Pechorin records in the latter half of his Piatigorsk diary are manifestations of illness: fever (there is a "feverish quality" to Mary's movements in the June 12th entry [В ее движениях было что-то лихорадочное]), headache, insomnia, lightheadedness, exhaustion, trembling. Perhaps because sickness represents the ultimate loss of control over one's own body, it is to the language of sickness that Lermontov has recourse when his hero begins taking note of unscripted bodily reactions.

It is after this meeting with Vera in the grotto that we first see Pechorin gallop out on his horse in an attempt to overcome emotional turmoil with physical fatigue. However, the most

[204] Andrea Meyer-Fraatz points out that Pechorin's meeting with Vera in the grotto is one of the only nature scenes in "Princess Mary" in which the natural world is not likened to a theater. See Meyer-Fraatz, "Kavkazskaia priroda kak zerkalo chuvstv v 'Geroe nashego vremeni' Lermontova," *Mir Lermontova*, ed. M.N. Virolainen & A.A. Karpova (SPB: Skriptorium, 2015, pp. 528-543), p. 537.

direct and extended focus on Pechorin's own physical embodiment comes in the June 16th entry. The retrospective section opens with an account of Pechorin's physical state the night before the duel, when he suffers from a bout of insomnia. The account concludes with a description of Pechorin's own face as it is reflected back to him in a mirror the next morning: "I looked in the mirror: there was a dull pallor on my face, which still bore the marks of my wretched sleepless night. My eyes, though, shone proud and hard, despite the dark rings around them. I was satisfied with myself" (132) [Я посмотрелся в зеркало; тусклая бледность покрывала лицо мое, хранившее следы мучительной бессонницы; но глаза, хотя окруженные коричневою тенью, блистали гордо и неумолимо. Я остался доволен собою] (4:439-440). This description is another manifestation of the stylistic shift from diary to retrospective narration. Previously uninterested in recording his own appearance—apart from a brief mention of the pleasure he takes in wearing Circassian clothing—Pechorin now offers a detailed external view of himself for the first time.

The scene in "Princess Mary" which places the greatest focus on Pechorin's own physical sensations, however, is the one in which he gallops his horse to death after killing Grushnitskii and receiving Vera's farewell letter: "I galloped, breathless with impatience. The thought of arriving in Pyatigorsk too late to catch Vera hammered at my heart. If only I could see her for one more minute, to say goodbye, to press her hand…I prayed, cursed, wept, laughed. I can't describe the state of agitation and despair I was in" (143) [Я скакал, задыхаясь от нетерпения. Мысль не застать уже ее в Пятигорске молотком ударяла мне в сердце! – одну минуту, еще одну минуту видеть ее, проститься, пожать ей руку…Я молился, проклинал плакал, смеялся…нет, ничто не выразит моего беспокойства, отчаяния!] (4:455). Pechorin's description of his mad ride in pursuit of Vera represents the antithesis of scripted behavior. It follows two major unscripted events: the death of Grushnitskii, which Pechorin could not have entered the duel expecting, given that he seems to have believed that Grushnitskii would accept one of the alternatives open to him (that is, either to fire wide or to own up to his own deceit); and Vera's departure. These unforeseen events have a powerful effect on Pechorin's physical state: for a brief period, he almost loses control over his body.

The horseback riding scene from the June 16th entry represents embodiment in a way that is entirely at odds with the depictions of performative movement and gesture in the early sections of "Princess Mary." This sort of intense focus on the body in a state of nervous exhaustion is more commonly associated with the early novel. Pechorin's preoccupation with his own (unauthorized) embodied experience in the retrospective narrative thus supports the idea that this section of the text is closer to novelistic than to theatrical discourse. And yet the *ex post facto* narration, when read against the immediacy and relative open-endedness of the earlier diary entries, draws the "authenticity" of these narrated experiences into question almost as much as does the performativity of Pechorin's utterances in those early entries. Obvious contrivances such as Pechorin's claim to remember Vera's lengthy letter by heart ("This is the letter. Every word is stamped indelibly on my memory…" (141) [Вот оно, это письмо, которого каждое слово неизгладимо врезалось в моей памяти…] (4:452)) reveal that the supposed faithfulness of this account is also a pose.

In the final analysis, "Princess Mary" is comprised of three distinct levels or modes of narration. The first level makes up roughly the first half of the narrative, from Pechorin's arrival in Piatigorsk through the June 5th diary entry. This section of the text relies heavily on theatrical discourse and more or less follows the script that Pechorin has decided to stage in order to amuse himself in the spa town. It is *future-oriented*: Pechorin manipulates events so that they will move

toward a certain conclusion (*razviazka*). This level of the narrative alternates dramatic scenes (in which the focus is on tone, gesture, pose, and effect)—which are staged by Pechorin-the-director and performed by Pechorin-the-character—with dramatic utterances that recall the soliloquy and the dramatic monologue. These utterances give varying degrees of insight into Pechorin's character, while also being marked by a performative quality that prevents the reader from accepting their content at face value. Recalling the difficulty that Lermontov faced when trying to represent interiority in the third-person narrative of *Princess Ligovskaia*, we might posit that he saw in the diary form of *A Hero of Our Time* a compromise between the first-person confessional genre of the soliloquy—which he had already mastered in his dramas—and novelistic discourse. At the same time, Lermontov is able to achieve a greater sustained focus on his hero's inner world in the fictional diary of "Princess Mary" than in *Masquerade* or *Two Brothers*. In a play a soliloquy is always followed by the activity of other characters—other selves—returning to the stage, potentially contradicting the protagonist's interpretation of events or offering their own competing viewpoint. In a diary, by contrast, no event or character achieves representation without being filtered through the subjective perception of the diarist. The particular image of Pechorin that emerges from this section of "Princess Mary," then, combines and draws upon the affordances of both dramatic art and first-person narrative discourse.

The second level of narration comprises the diary entries from June 5th through the first half of the June 16th entry. It is *present-oriented*: Pechorin has surrendered control over his script and is no longer consistently engaged in planning or manipulating events. Instead, unauthorized occurrences and spontaneous bodily experiences slip into the narration. The self-reflective passages move gradually from the realm of performativity to genuine introspection, away from the genre of the soliloquy or the dramatic monologue and toward first-person novelistic discourse. At this point in the narrative Pechorin has surrendered to the idea that fate may be guiding his actions, a viewpoint that allows him to escape responsibility for the events of the June 5th *denouement*.

The third and final level of narration in "Princess Mary" consists of the retrospective section of the June 16th diary entry. This level is *past-oriented*: Pechorin narrates events from a distance of six weeks, after enough time has passed for a clear narrative to crystallize in his mind. According to this narrative, Pechorin has indeed stepped into the role of fifth-act executor of justice, guided by fate to punish Grushnitskii for his deceit in the duel. This section of the text is marked by an absence of self-reflective utterances as well as a far greater focus on Pechorin's physical embodiment. The image of himself that Pechorin offers in the retrospective part of "Princess Mary" is almost external, at times as though he is describing a character in a novel rather than composing a diary entry.

The characterization of Pechorin that emerges from "Princess Mary" is made up of all three of these narrative levels. While the story gradually moves away from the model of a dramatic script, it would be overly simplistic to suggest that "Princess Mary" abandons the theatrical mode in favor of the novelistic. Instead, Lermontov brings together and negotiates between these different modes—between the dramatic and the novelistic, between performativity and authenticity, scriptedness and spontaneity—in an attempt to work out the best literary form for depicting his hero, both on the level of psychology and on the level of physical embodiment. The result of this experiment in juxtaposing the affordances of stage drama and first-person prose narration is ultimately ambivalent: neither the dramatic nor the diaristic proves capable of fully manifesting the hero's selfhood. A full picture of Pechorin is only glimpsed in the spaces between the distinct forms that make up "Princess Mary:" between the playwright-director, the

actor-character (both the leading protagonist and the secondary character in the fifth act), the diarist, and the retrospective first-person narrator. Together, these multiple selves generate a more complex and successful image of the hero whom Lermontov had only managed to capture in fragments in previous works, whether dramatic (*Masquerade*, *Two Brothers*) or narrative (*Princess Ligovskaia*).

III. Theatricality and Fate in "Taman" and "The Fatalist"

Theatricality enters *A Hero of Our Time* with Pechorin, whose first appearance in "Maxim Maximych" introduces an element of drama into the prose narrative. The dramatic mode is then fully developed in "Princess Mary," where it comes into conflict with the proto-novelistic discourse of the diary. But what about the remaining sections of Pechorin's journal? Which of these forms does Lermontov employ in the other two stories that Pechorin narrates? In the Foreword [*Predislovie*] to the journal the frame narrator insists that the diary is a direct reflection of Pechorin's mind and soul ("Reading over these notes, I felt convinced of the sincerity of the man who so ruthlessly exposed his own failings and vices […] it is based on the self-observation of a mature mind and is written with no vain desire to arouse sympathy or surprise" (55) [Перечитывая эти записки, я убедился в искренности того, кто так беспощадно выставлял наружу собственные слабости и пороки […] она – следствие наблюдений ума зрелого над самим собою и […] писана без тщеславного желания возбудить участие или удивление] (4:339)) and situates the journal firmly within the tradition of literary diaries by comparing it to Rousseau's *Confessions*. Yet the other two stories that bookend "Princess Mary"—"Taman" and "The Fatalist"—do not really fit the diary form. Both are self-contained tales rather than discrete diary entries, and in both texts Pechorin's function is closer to that of a wandering frame narrator than an introspective diarist. Yet it is important to consider both of these stories—and their relation to the drama-diary form of "Princess Mary"—in order to understand how the experimental discourse of the latter fits into the image of Pechorin constructed across the novel as a whole.

"Taman" is neither diaristic nor dramatic. In fact, the story is ultimately antithetical to both modes, and thus appears as a sort of photographic negative to the two major forms developed in "Princess Mary." This is not a true diary: we learn almost nothing about the first-person narrator, not even his name. Only the framing makes it clear that the narrator is Pechorin.[205] There are no introspective passages – the most we discover is that the narrator is interested in the study of physiognomy and that he had some vague affairs with women when he was young, but has since become disillusioned, a fact presented in stock Romantic phrases: "It reminded me of those looks that had played such havoc with my life in the old days" (66) [[взор «ундины»] мне напомнил один из тех взглядов, которые в старые годы так самовалстно играли моею жизнью] (4:351). The one distinctive element of Pechorin's character that is already evident in "Taman" is his habit of spying and eavesdropping. Pechorin serves as a passive witness to about half the action in the story: twice he secretes himself among the grass and rocks of the cliff and spies on the group of smugglers on the beach. Pechorin's trademark voyeurism would seem to introduce an element of theatricality into "Taman," as it places Pechorin in the role of spectator to the unfolding drama of the smuggling operation.

[205] Lermontov began work on "Taman" as early as 1837, before he had conceived the idea of writing *A Hero of Our Time*. The story was first published separately in *Notes from the Fatherland* [*Отечественные записки*] in 1840.

And yet "Taman" is, if anything, an anti-theatrical story. The setting and characters conspire to prevent Pechorin from understanding the unfolding action even as he watches it play out. There is a "mystery" here that he can't get to the bottom of: "I'd had enough of this and went out, determined to get to the bottom of this mystery" (62) [Мне это надоело, и я вышел, твердо решившись достать ключ этой загадки] (4:347). The main events occur on a rocky shoreline at the base of a steep slope, a hidden, nearly inaccessible location. This remote beach, which can only be reached via a perilous climb down a sheer cliff, is a precise spatial opposite to the open "amphitheater" of "Princess Mary." The climate and natural atmosphere, too, are uncooperative. While the moon shines brightly through the window of Pechorin's room, it clouds over or is not yet risen both times he sets foot on the beach, leaving him to observe or participate in the unfolding events in partial darkness. And then there are the smugglers themselves. The strange blind boy who pretends to speak only Ukrainian; the old woman who claims to be deaf, but overhears Pechorin questioning the boy; the mischievous "undine" with her incomprehensible song; the mysterious daredevil Yanko – all of these individuals are incomprehensible to Pechorin, despite his avowed interest in physiognomy and the obvious skill he evinces at reading people in "Princess Mary."

On the one hand, it is only logical that the Pechorin of "Taman," newly arrived in the Caucasus, would have a harder time navigating the peripheral spaces of the Russian Empire than the Pechorin of "Princess Mary" or "The Fatalist"; and it is no surprise that the upper-class spa society of Piatigorsk is more comprehensible than the Taman smugglers to a Petersburg officer. But the story's preoccupation with obfuscation, secrecy, and not being able to trust one's own senses goes beyond simply showing another—younger, less experienced—side of Pechorin's character.

"Taman," when read against "Princess Mary," is fundamentally anti-theatrical. If the prevailing theatrical metaphor in "Princess Mary" is that of the script, then "Taman" is an exercise in unscriptedness.[206] Rather than a skilled dramatist capable of bending social scripts to his will, in this story Pechorin is unable to identify the roles for which the Taman smugglers might be suited. Seeing the mysterious girl singing on the roof of his hut, Pechorin casts her in the role of an undine ("my undine" [моя ундина]), a fairytale mermaid. This proves to be a nearly fatal mistake. In an ironic reversal, it is the girl who manipulates Pechorin, not the other way around.[207] And Pechorin is not just an ineffective actor and director in this story; he is an

[206] This is not to say that there are no social scripts at work in the smugglers' interactions. This is a social world to which Pechorin has no access, and so the scripts that guide the smugglers' behavior are opaque to him. My contention is that the emphasis on opacity and misapprehension in "Taman" goes beyond merely illustrating Pechorin's unfamiliarity with a peripheral social space. Rather, it is so pronounced as to constitute a thematic antithesis to "Princess Mary," in which the ease with which Pechorin reads and manipulates social scripts sustains the tale's larger commitment to theatrical discourse.

[207] Richard Peace takes up Eikhenbaum's suggestion that the function of "Taman" in *A Hero of Our Time* is to introduce a note of irony into the representation of Pechorin's character, arguing that this reversal constitutes the "ironical unmasking of the hero." See Peace, "The Role of Taman' in Lermontov's 'Geroy nashego vremeni,'" *Slavonic and East European Review* 45 (1967), p. 22. For a broader discussion of role reversal and liminality in "Taman," see Valeria Sobol, "The Uncanny Frontier of Russian Identity: Travel, Ethnography, and Empire in Lermontov's 'Taman,'" *The Russian Review*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (January 2011), pp. 65-79; and Joe Andrew, "'The Blind Will See': Narrative and Gender in 'Taman,'" *Russian Literature* 31 (1992), pp. 449-76. David Powelstock suggests that "Taman" "establishes *for the reader* the vulnerability that Pechorin must project *for Mary* to seduce her within the fictional world of 'Princess Mary,'" a vulnerability that becomes part of the larger "seduction of the reader" that Powelstock sees as organizing the novel's *siuzhet*. See Powelstock, *Becoming Mikhail Lermontov*, p. 359.

equally fumbling spectator, unable to understand the events that play out in front of him and incapable of organizing them into a coherent text.

Ultimately, the characters and events of "Taman" resist scriptedness. This is especially important because the story contains Pechorin's first direct reference to fate: "I felt sad. Why did fate toss me into the peaceful midst of these *honest smugglers*?" (69) [Мне стало грустно. И зачем было судьбе кинуть меня в мирный круг *честных контрабандистов*?] (4:355). As in "Princess Mary" and "The Fatalist," Pechorin's remonstrance prompts the reader to reevaluate the events of the narrative through the lens of Pechorin's own culpability vs. the role played by chance. Yet in "Taman" the complete absence of a script, the sense of chaos and disorientation that colors everything that happens, renders Pechorin's appeal to fate absurd. In the absence of both the diaristic and the dramatic modes in this story, there is no sense of a guiding force—either a controlling authorial persona or a higher power—to organize events and guide them toward a predetermined conclusion.

If "Taman" resists scriptedness, then "The Fatalist" raises the opposite possibility that there is a grand script—predestination—underwriting every aspect of human existence.[208] Correspondingly, unlike "Taman," "The Fatalist" is a story deeply underwritten by a sense of theatricality. As the final section of Pechorin's journal and the last tale in the novel, "The Fatalist"—which presumably takes place some months after the events of "Princess Mary," but before "Bela"—occupies an important position in the collection and would seem to offer the concluding statement on Pechorin's character.[209] Yet "The Fatalist," though it follows the drama-diary of "Princess Mary" on the level of both *fabula* and *siuzhet,* largely reverts back to the non-diaristic discourse of "Taman." While we know for certain that the narrator of this story is Pechorin, the few self-reflective passages that appear in "The Fatalist" offer vague metaphysical commentary rather than true diaristic introspection. There is certainly no clear sense in which Pechorin has changed or been permanently affected by the events of "Princess Mary." Despite its terminal position in the novel, "The Fatalist," far from holding the key to Pechorin's psychology, offers barely any development of the hero's character.

What the story does provide is a final development of the theatrical motif. The action is organized around three primary scenes: the initial bet between Pechorin and Vulich; Vulich's death (described to Pechorin third hand by a group of officers, who heard it from the two Cossacks chasing after the murderer); and Pechorin's capture of the drunken Cossack who killed Vulich. In narrating each of these scenes in his journal, Pechorin endows them with a high sense of theatricality, even the scene of Vulich's death which he did not witness personally. Moreover, Pechorin has a hand in staging both the first and the third scene. He instigates both events, first by placing a bet against Vulich, and then by offering to capture the Cossack alive in his own gamble against fate.

The betting scene at the beginning of the story is intensely theatrical. Out of all the scenes in the novel, it would probably be the easiest to stage. The moment when Vulich suddenly steps forward and interrupts the officers' debate about predestination by offering to personally put fate

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[208] For a foundational discussion of the ways in which 19th-century gambling codes are made to manifest the philosophical problem of free will vs. predetermination by a "fatal chain of causes and effects" [фатальная цепь причин и следствий] in "The Fatalist," see Iurii Lotman, "Tema kart i kartochnoi igry v russkoi literature nachala XIX veka," *Izbrannye stat'i v trekh tomakh*, Vol. 2 (Tallinn, 1992).

[209] Thus, John Mersereau writes that a central critical problem of *A Hero of Our Time* is "to determine in what way 'The Fatalist' assists in bringing the image of [the hero's] personality into final focus." See Mersereau, "'The Fatalist' as a Keystone of a Hero of Our Times," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Summer 1960, pp. 137-146), p. 140.

to the test is inherently dramatic. So too is Pechorin's proposal of a bet and his tipping of the twenty gold pieces onto the table. Then there is Vulich's selection of the pistol from the major's bedroom, followed by Pechorin's stunning proclamation that Vulich "is going to die today" [— Вы нынче умрете!]. Vulich stages the moment he shoots himself with special care – he asks Pechorin to toss a card in the air and only pulls the trigger the moment the card touches the table:

> I picked up a card from the table, I think it was the ace of hearts, and tossed it in the air. Everyone held their breath. With mingled fear and some indescribable curiosity, all eyes darted to and fro between the pistol and the fateful ace. It fluttered in the air and floated slowly down. As it touched the table, Vulich pulled the trigger. The pistol misfired. (151)
>
> Я взял со стола, как теперь помню, червонного туза и бросил кверху: дыхание у всех остановилось; все глаза, выражая страх и какое-то неопределенное любопытство, бегали от пистолета к роковому тузу, который, трепеща на воздухе, опускался медленно; в ту минуту, как он коснулся стола, Вулич спустил курок…осечка! (4:466)

The overwhelming tension in this scene lends it an air of theatricality, as Vulich must have intended. When the gathered officers cry out in relief that the pistol couldn't have been loaded, Vulich does not simply open the barrel to check; he aims the gun at a cap hanging over the window and shoots a hole straight through it. This dramatic second shot proves to Pechorin, at least, that predestination exists: "I'm not sure now if I believe in predestination or not, but that evening I had no doubts of it at all. We'd had striking proof of it" (153) [не знаю наверное, верю ли я теперь предопределению или нет, но в этот вечер я ему твердо верил: доказательство был разительно] (4:469). Of course, the shot proves nothing. There is no logic behind the gamble, which cannot possibly be mistaken for a philosophical argument either for or against predestination. But the sheer theater of the scene gives the overwhelming impression of proof. Vulich, with Pechorin's help, purposely plays up the drama of the moment in order to lend rhetorical weight to the demonstration, rendering the outcome of the wager persuasive despite its irrationality as a philosophical argument.

The other two crucial scenes in the story are also taken by Pechorin as proofs in the argument over the existence of fate, though they are equally dependent upon theatrical effect to function as "evidence." The first of these scenes is Vulich's death. This death occurs "off-stage," as it were, but Pechorin's fourth-hand description of the death scene renders it dramatic nonetheless. Pechorin focuses on Vulich's last words, delivered right as he is on the brink of death: "he was on the point of death and said only three words: 'He was right'" (155) [он был уже при последнем издыхании и сказал только два слова: «Он прав!»] (4:471). Pechorin understands that these words refer to his own proclamation that he could see the "mark of death" [печать близкой кончины] on Vulich's face. These last words, pronounced with Vulich's dying breath, serve as a further dramatic "proof" that predestination exists, and that fate leaves its mark on the human body – a convention straight out of theatrical fate tragedies, in which some visible sign of destiny is often inscribed onto the body of the hero.

Finally, Pechorin decides to follow Vulich's example and stage his own "test" of fate. He offers to capture the drunken Cossack alive, at great risk to himself: "Just then I had an odd idea. Like Vulich, I decided to put fate to the test" (156) [В эту минуту у меня в голове

промелькнула странная мысль: подобно Вуличу, я вздумал испытать судьбу] (4:473). The gripping scene that follows, in which Pechorin manages to subdue the Cossack while just barely avoiding being shot in the head, is offered as a final proof that fate exists. Clearly it was not Pechorin's destiny to die that day; "How can one not be a fatalist after this?" (157) [После всего этого как бы, кажется, не сделаться фаталистом?] (4:473). Pechorin immediately undercuts his own claim by acknowledging that it is safer to doubt everything, including one's own beliefs; but this final prevarication is not enough to cancel out the dramatic power of the three "proofs" that have just been offered.

In developing the philosophical argument at the heart of the journal entry that makes up "The Fatalist," Pechorin seems to want these three narrated scenes to speak for themselves. He presents them to the reader with relatively little additional commentary apart from the passage contemplating the stars, alongside a few remarks about his own character that merely repeat statements he has already made in "Princess Mary." The focus of the story is on the three dramatic "proofs," which appear to have been consciously staged at least in part by Vulich and / or Pechorin, and which become even more theatrical in Pechorin's retrospective narration. This narration skillfully notes details like positioning, gesture, and tone, and—with the foreknowledge Pechorin-the-narrator possesses about the murder—repeatedly mentions Pechorin's impression that Vulich bears the "stamp of death" on his face.

What is most interesting about Pechorin's (and Vulich's) impulse to test fate via these elaborate, highly theatrical scenes is the fact that predestination itself is often thought of in dramaturgic terms as an ultimate script. As we have seen, in the June 5th entry of "Princess Mary" Pechorin mentally relinquishes his own authorship over the tragedy he has set in motion by positing fate as the actual author of events and himself as fate's instrument. By the time we reach the retrospective narration of the June 16th entry, Pechorin has given himself over to this idea entirely, a fact which is reflected in the shift in Pechorin's mode of self-narration from diarist-playwright manipulating future events to narrator-novelist retroactively recording events that have already happened. In "The Fatalist" Pechorin is again a dramaturge, but one who is no longer interested in authoring his own plays. Instead, in a sort of bizarre reversal, he choreographs (or helps Vulich choreograph) scenes which are designed to affirm the preexistence of a metaphysical script. In other words, the success of the scene reveals the presence of the script. As the narrator, Pechorin imbues these events with an even stronger atmosphere of theatricality in the retelling, thereby enhancing their dramatic effect.

Ultimately, then, "Taman" and "The Fatalist" present diametrically opposed approaches to the question that lies at the heart of "Princess Mary" and of Pechorin's journal as a whole: What is the status of the individual—both in the real world and in the aesthetic world of the literary text, where it is the task of the author to embody his hero as a unique individual—when considered against the backdrop of social, historical, and possibly divine scripts? The disorienting anti-theatricality of "Taman" produces an image of Pechorin as both free, in the sense that events do not follow a guiding script, and powerless, since the seaside village is so resistant to scriptedness that Pechorin is unable to exercise any control over his surroundings. On the other hand, the extreme theatricality of "The Fatalist" presents a world in which nothing is not scripted. In the world of this text Pechorin commits himself—if only temporarily—to the idea of predestination, a commitment that is accompanied by a stylistic shift toward excessive theatricality. As Pechorin's final rhetorical evasion shows ("How can one not be a fatalist after this? Yet who really knows if he believes a thing or not? How often our beliefs are mere illusions or mental aberrations" (157) [После всего этого как бы, кажется, не сделаться фаталистом?

Но кто знает наверное, убежден ли он в чем или нет? …и как часто мы принимаем за убеждение обман чувств или промах рассудка!] (4:473)), none of these stances or modes of aesthetic discourse is conclusive. The Pechorin of *A Hero of Our Time*—the final and most complete version of a hero Lermontov had been trying for years to capture in literary form—is realized only through the juxtaposition of drama and narrative, performance and improvisation, scriptedness and resistance to scripting.

IV. Conclusion

Lermontov's decision to abandon the conventions of early realism in *Princess Ligovskaia* for the inconclusive and fragmentary form of *A Hero of Our Time* represents an inversion of the standard literary-historical narrative. The tripartite structure I have identified in "Princess Mary" would at times seem to mark a transition from theatrical to novelistic discourse, effectively "correcting" the progression of Lermontov's art so that it once again points toward the psychological novel. This structure comprises three distinct narrative modes: 1) scripting (May 11 – June 5), which is future-oriented and relies on theatrical conventions like the dramatic utterance and dramatic gesture; 2) the diaristic mode (June 5 – first half of June 16), which is present-oriented and registers unauthorized emotional and bodily experiences; and 3) retrospective narration (second half of June 16), which is past-oriented and presents a largely external view of Pechorin. And yet—inasmuch as one of the central artistic goals of *A Hero of Our Time* is to probe the boundaries between self and non-self, to question the extent to which the self is free from (pre-)determination by outside social, cultural, and metaphysical forces—each of these three narrative modes has its own affordances and shortcomings. The riddle of where the borderline lies between Pechorin's "authentic" and "performative" selves remains unsolved. Neither the "theatrical" nor the more "novelistic" sections of "Princess Mary" provide an answer; but together, these modes come closer to at least posing the right questions than Lermontov's purely dramatic (*Masquerade*, *Two Brothers*) or purely novelistic (*Princess Ligovskaia*) works of the 1830s.

The inconclusiveness of the alternation between theatrical and novelistic modes in "Princess Mary" is affirmed by the other two stories that make up Pechorin's Journal. "Taman" precedes "Princess Mary" but is anti-dramatic; "The Fatalist," which follows it, is highly theatrical. Since *fabula* and *siuzhet* coincide in the Journal[210], it would make sense on both a characterological and formal level for the story that affirms scriptedness ("The Fatalist") to precede "Princess Mary," and for the story that resists scripting ("Taman") to follow it. Clearly, then, there is no lasting change in the way Pechorin perceives or narrates himself. There is only a series of viewpoints, genres, and narrative modes that are alternately brought to bear on the dominant question of Pechorin's autonomy vis-à-vis external determinants. These determinants include fate, social expectations, and cultural models (e.g., Byronism). As I have shown in this

[210] The generally accepted chronology of events in *A Hero of Our Time*, on the level of *fabula*, is as follows: 1) "Taman" – 2) "Princess Mary" – 3) "The Fatalist" – 4) "Bela" – 5) "Maxim Maximych." Nabokov provides a detailed breakdown of this chronology in the foreword to his translation of the novel, complete with the approximate years in which these events can be supposed to have taken place (beginning with "Taman" in 1830 and concluding with Pechorin's death in 1838 or 1839). See Nabokov, foreword to *A Hero of Our Time*, pp. viii-ix. The one significant point of contention in this chronology is whether the events of "Bela" might have preceded those of "The Fatalist." For an argument in favor of this alternate chronology, see Boris Udodov, *Roman M. Iu. Lermontova 'Geroi nashego vremeni'* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1989), pp. 144-48.

chapter, theatrical discourse and formal conventions from the realm of dramatic performance are central to the novel's experimental and open-ended approach to this question.

The importance of theatrical models is affirmed by the fact that *fate* is the primary external determinant referred to by Pechorin across all three Journal stories. As we have seen, Pechorin's references to fate often invoke the dramatic genre of tragedy, and implicitly contextualize his anxieties over his own autonomy and culpability in terms of a conflict between classical (Sophoclean) and modern (Romantic) tragedy. The central question driving Pechorin's anxiety is whether he himself is to blame for the frequently pivotal role he plays in other people's tragic *denouements*: from the "honest smugglers" whose peaceful lives he upends in "Taman;" to Grushnitskii's violent death and Mary's despondency in "Princess Mary;" to Vulich's mysterious fate in "The Fatalist," which Pechorin does not cause but which he claims to have foreseen in the "imprint of death" on Vulich's face. This strange foresight aligns Pechorin with the fifth-act executioners of classical tragedy, just as his ill-fated role in "Taman" raises the possibility that here, too, he is destined to serve as the executioner of the fifth act despite the story's overall resistance to scriptedness. The central passage from the June 5th entry of "Princess Mary"—in which Pechorin surrenders his dual role as director–hero and accepts the mantle of fifth-act executioner, in an implied abandonment of Romantic tragic models for classical ones—thus reverberates throughout "Taman" and "The Fatalist."

Together, then, the three stories that constitute the Journal engage in a sustained literary experiment in negotiating between theatrical discourse—particularly the discourse of tragedy—and narrative discourse from an array of literary genres, including the adventure tale ("Taman"), the society tale ("Princess Mary"), and the duelist's tale ("The Fatalist"). Ultimately, neither the theatrical nor the narrative mode is privileged. Instead, these two modes function together to probe the literary text's capacity for representing that crisis of selfhood which arises when the boundary lines between self and non-self, autonomy and external pre-determination, begin to blur.

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