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Forms of the Peasant:  
Aesthetics and Social Thought in Russian Realism, 1847-1877

by

Jennifer Jean Flaherty

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Slavic Languages and Literatures

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Irina Paperno, Chair  
Professor Luba Golburt  
Professor Victoria Frede

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By Jennifer Jean Flaherty

Abstract

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Professor Irina Paperno, Chair

At the center of this dissertation's inquiry is Russian realism's construction of what I call "the form of the peasant." Created by writers, this mythic image emerged in tandem with the movement's signature formal innovations in narrative perspective, poetic voice, and descriptive style. It also gave shape to the very ideas of history, national identity, subjectivity, and language which defined Russian realism as a literary movement. The three chapters approach several major texts – Ivan Turgenev's *Zapiski okhotnika* [Notes from a Hunter] (1847-1852), Lev Tolstoy's "Utro pomeschika" (1852-1856) and *Anna Karenina* (1874-1877), and Nikolai Nekrasov's *Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho* [Who in Russia Can Live well] (1866-1877) – from a historical and formalist perspective, offering a history of realist forms in the social and intellectual context from which they emerge and to which they contribute. Close readings of narrative and poetic texts are performed alongside analyses of a range of theoretical texts that are central to Russian social thought in the mid-nineteenth century, including works by Vissarion Belinsky, Nikolai Chernyshevsky, Nikolai Dobroliubov, Alexander Potebnia, and G. W. F. Hegel. At the intersection of these analyses emerges a myth of agrarian life structured by social anxieties in three interpretative frameworks. First, realism is illuminated in its parallel development to serfdom abolition. Second, social identities (e.g., master and serf; peasant and intellectual) are shown to inhere in forms of narrative and lyric subjectivity. Finally, literature's engagement with myths of peasant life as pre-modern or timeless belies a central preoccupation with the concept of history understood in terms of non-teleological change. Building on work across disciplines at the intersection of social thought and literary form and reassessments of realism across national traditions, this work is grounded in the belief that it is the nature of literary forms to complicate ideology, expressing ideas obliquely and exploring contradictions. My aim is to show how realism works at once to establish normative frameworks and undermine them, locating Russian realism's engagement with the peasant myth in precisely this point of tension. Here, the "form of the peasant" expresses an escape from modernity as well as a confrontation with it. In "Forms of the Peasant," Russian realism emerges as a literary movement with strong connections to other national traditions and historical epochs – connections based in paradigms of empire, class conflict, systems of bondage, and their aftermath.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	ii
A Note on Transliteration	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE PLACE OF THE PEASANT: IVAN TURGENEV	24
INTRODUCTION	24
SECTION ONE: THE IMPERATIVE OF IMMEDIACY	29
SECTION TWO: DISCOURSES OF NATIONALISM	36
SECTION THREE: DESCRIPTION	42
SECTION FOUR: NARRATION	52
CODA: NOSTALGIA	57
CHAPTER TWO: MASTER AND SERF: LEV TOLSTOY	63
INTRODUCTION	63
SECTION ONE: THE EMERGENCE OF THE NOVELISTIC SUBJECT	68
SECTION TWO: THE NIGHTMARE OF MERE LIFE	84
SECTION 2.1: LEVIN: THE DREAM OF LIFE	87
SECTION 2.2: ANNA: THE PEASANT TORN ASUNDER	95
CONCLUSION	101
CHAPTER THREE: THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE: NIKOLAI NEKRASOV	104
INTRODUCTION	104
SECTION ONE: THE POET AND HIS CROWDS	107
SECTION TWO: A LANGUAGE WITHOUT HISTORY: FOLK STYLIZATIONS	118
SECTION THREE: VOICE(S) IN <i>KOMU NA RUSI ZHIT' KHOROSHO</i>	129
CONCLUDING REMARKS	138
BIBLIOGRAPHY	143

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I'd like to dedicate the dissertation to my grandparents, and to Anna Helms, who was never scared to try something new.

### **A Note on Transliteration**

Transliterations follow the Library of Congress system, except when an anglicized name has been well established (e.g., Tolstoy, Belinsky, Yury). The scholarly apparatus, however, follows the LOC system.

## *Introduction*

A particularly potent agrarian myth pervades Russian realism. Cultivated in literature and culture, certain ideas about “the life of the peasant” emerge as alternatives to historical realities, from urbanization to social change. One might recall, for instance, the well-known scene from *Anna Karenina* in which Levin recuses himself from the alienation of modern life to mow in the fields with his peasants, no longer serfs at the time when the novel is set, but still burdened with the obligations that lend the scene an aura of the old days. Falling into a rhythm that is set, it would seem, to a pre-modern clock, Levin feels nothing but his laboring body and thinks nothing at all—perhaps the greatest relief for a generation which, as Dostoevsky diagnosed it, suffered consciousness like a disease. Another place to look for the agrarian myth is in Dostoevsky’s own work, where one finds a story of a peasant, presented as autobiographical, in the writer’s published journal, *Dnevnik pisatel’ia* [A Writer’s Diary] (1876). In this story, an imprisoned Dostoevsky remembers a peasant from his childhood. That peasant catches in his arms the young Dostoevsky, who had hurled himself from a forest in fear, comforting him with maternal caresses and smearing on his face the sign of the cross with an earth-sodden finger. Taking the image of the soil to symbolic extremes toward the end of the nineteenth century, Gleb Uspensky invests peasants with “the power of the earth” in a series of essays from 1882, building on the myth that they are an antidote to cultural erosion in all its various guises, from the loss of national identity to industrial capitalism. Of course, Levin eventually returns to modern reality just as Dostoevsky’s narrator wakes up in prison, which amounts to something similar. Both are nevertheless renewed, drawing on that power which Uspensky – and many others – hoped could redirect (or else escape from) history itself.

At the center of this dissertation’s inquiry is Russian realism’s construction of what I call “the form of the peasant.” Created by writers, this mythic image emerged in tandem with the movement’s signature formal innovations in narrative perspective, poetic voice, and descriptive style. It also gave shape to the very ideas of history, national identity, subjectivity, and language which defined Russian realism as a literary movement. I approach the texts under study—Ivan Turgenev’s *Zapiski okhotnika* [Notes from a Hunter] (1847-52), Lev Tolstoy’s *Utro pomeshchika* [A Landowner’s Morning] (1852-56) and *Anna Karenina* (1874-77), and Nikolai Nekrasov’s *Komu na Rusi zhit’ khorosho* [Who in Russia Can Live Well?] (1866-77)—from a historical and formalist perspective, offering a history of realist forms in the social and intellectual context from which they emerge and to which they contribute. Each of my three chapters addresses a major preoccupation of realism, from nationalism in Turgenev’s work to subjectivity in Tolstoy’s and language in Nekrasov’s. As the most pervasive concern expressed in the peasant’s image, history frames the study as a whole. Bringing together studies of the major features of Russian social thought in the nineteenth century and of the distinguishing elements of realist style, my aim is to illuminate Russian realism as unified by the peasant myth.

The dissertation is grounded in the belief that it is the nature of literary form to complicate ideology by expressing ideas obliquely, exploring contradictions, and entertaining improbabilities. In my analysis of the peasant’s image, I consider how formal dynamics establish as well as erode that image’s promises, from a pre-modern past more unified than the present, to a form of being more immediately alive than analytically reflective. Most centrally, the peasant’s image comes to symbolize a confrontation with history rather than its escape, where history is defined as the force that dissolves all things into its ongoing stream. This introduction establishes a framework for the proceeding analysis by addressing this fundamental inversion, that is, from imagined unities (a nation, a centered subject, a “voice” underlying language) to constructs that



are made and unmade. I then outline my approach to the study of Russian realism as Hegelian, offering a theoretical basis for the movement in terms of reversals and oppositions. Hegelian philosophy is a feature of my primary texts, and a trend of scholarship which this study seeks to enter may also be described as Hegelian, from Georg Lukács to Fredric Jameson and beyond. After elaborating on the concept of form as a way to build on this approach, I then sketch the outlines of the dissertation's historical context in order to highlight the significance of peasants to the social and intellectual concerns of the era.

### *The Peasant's Quiet Death*

Though the imaginative quality of "peasant life" is perhaps easy to discern in the scenes referenced above, literary criticism often yields a surprising investment in Russian realism's agrarian myth. In *Theory of the Novel*, Lukács exempts Russian realism, to a certain extent, from the historical perspective that shaped the broader European movement, epitomized, in his account, by the novel:

The greater closeness of nineteenth-century Russian literature to certain organic natural conditions, which were the given substratum of its underlying attitude and creative intention, made it possible for that literature to be *creatively* polemical. Tolstoy, coming after Turgenev—who was an essentially Western European novelist of disillusionment—created a form of the novel which overlaps to the maximum extent into the epic. Tolstoy's great and truly epic mentality, which has little to do with the novel form, aspires to a life based on a community of feeling among simple human beings closely bound to nature, a life which is intimately adapted to the great rhythm of nature, which moves according to nature's cycle of birth and death and excludes all structures which are not natural, which are petty and disruptive, causing disintegration and stagnation. 'The muzhik dies quietly,' Tolstoy wrote to Countess A. A. Tolstoy about his story *Three Deaths*.<sup>1</sup>

Among the first to invest literature with a critical function ("creative polemic"), Lukács locates Russian realism's critique of modernity in what he sees as an authentic (and emphatically natural) aspect of its historical context. The last lines in the passage quoted above draw a distinction, present in Russian realism itself, between "disintegration and stagnation" and the peasant's "quiet death." Modernity, on Lukács's account, is marked by impermanence; it is a time when unities dissolve into false divisions and social structures can never become home to those who live within them. The peasant's quiet death, on the other hand, is the mark of an organic and unified alternative. In making this distinction, Lukács posits one kind of death (the peasant's) in contrast to another (modern impermanence). In this fine line between death and impermanence, Russian realism "creatively polemizes" with its own myth. As we shall see, images of peasants do not augur an end to history, nor a life lived outside of it. Rather, these images betray a different sense of history, one that I shall argue is closer to "form" rather than "content," understood in the sense of something natural and stable. Only in the reversal of the agrarian myth, I argue, is Russian realism's own creative polemic most powerfully evinced.

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<sup>1</sup> Georg Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, trans. by Anna Bostock (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 145-6.

One need only look closer at those depictions, described by Lukács, of “a life based on a community of feeling among simple human beings closely bound to nature” to find that its allure is not unqualified. In *Anna Karenina*, Levin flees into the fields but finds exactly what he most fears: disobedience and oblivion. In “Muzhik Marei” [The Peasant Marei], Dostoevsky flees one form of the peasant, a ruthless convict (and the cause of his despair) into the arms of another. Finally, Uspensky’s “power of the earth” is fearfully despotic. In my conclusion to this dissertation, I return to Dostoevsky’s “Muzhik Marei” and, in chapter two, I address Levin’s famous *Arbeitskur*, when he mows with his peasants, in detail. Here, I would like to illustrate how the peasant myth of Russian realism is created, and often inverted, by taking a closer look at Uspensky’s essay (*Vlast’ zemli* [Power of the Earth]). In this essay, Uspensky reflects on peasant life in 1882 and the literary images with which that life had become inextricable. It concludes with comments about a well-known character from Tolstoy’s *Voina i mir* [War and Peace] (1869), Platon Karataev, who is among the most romanticized peasant characters in Russian realism. Uspensky, however, is unconvinced that Platon’s celebrated “love for the whole” is as idyllic as it seems.<sup>2</sup>

Uspensky initially lauds the peasant, represented by Platon, for his immediacy. At the heart of the peasant’s world-view (as Uspensky imagines it) is an attention to detail; peasants care not for the movements of history but are, quite literally, focused on blades of grass. The peasant himself, Uspensky continues, is an insignificant part of a larger whole, replaceable and endlessly renewed: “В Крымскую войну таких Платонов умирало без следа, без жалобы — тысячи, десятки тысяч. Сотни тысяч их умирает ежегодно по всей России безмолвно, безропотно, как трава, и сотни тысяч, так же как трава, рождаются...” [In the Crimean war Platons died without a trace, without a complaint. They died by the thousands, by the tens of thousands. Hundreds of thousands of them die every year across Russia without a sound, without a murmur, like grass, and hundreds of thousands, like grass, are born...].<sup>3</sup> Uspensky worries that peasants do not ultimately augur continuity and renewal but simply their own insignificance. Rather than intimating the whole, they represent the dissolution of the part:

Такая частица мрет массаи на Шипке, в снегах Кавказа, в песках Средней Азии...  
«Жизнь его, как отдельная жизнь, не имеет смысла.» Эта, не имеющая смысла,  
жизнь, не любя никого отдельно, ни себя, ни других, годна на все, с чем

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<sup>2</sup> It is another distinguishing feature of Russian realism that literary characters are taken by critics as historical facts, hardly different from actually existing people. Following Ilya Kliger’s application of Jameson’s claims from “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” to Russian literary history, I suggest that the reason for this slippage is mid-century Russia’s nature as “a locale in which clear differentiation between the domains of social and cultural activity had not been completed.” “Historical Poetics between Russia and the West: Toward a Nonlinear Model of Literary History and Social Ontology,” *Poetics Today*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2017), p. 461. The nearness of literature to social and political exigencies, as Kliger points out, supports Jameson’s arguments about literature and allegory, elaborated also in *The Political Unconscious*: “The idea is, in other words, that if interpretation in terms of expressive causality or of allegorical master narratives remains a constant temptation, this is because such master narratives have inscribed themselves into the texts as well as in our thinking about them.” *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 34. See also “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” *Social Text*, No. 15 (1986), pp. 65-88.

<sup>3</sup> Gleb Uspenskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v chetyrnadtsati tomakh*, eds. N. F. Bel’chikov, et. al. (Moskva/Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo Adakademii Nauk SSSR, 1949), vol. 8, p. 120. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

*сталкивает жизнь... Все может сделать Платон. «Возьми и свяжи... «Возьми и развяжи,» «застрели», «освободи», «бей», «бей сильнее» ... (italics added).*<sup>4</sup>

“Suited to anything,” Platon dies and kills without ceremony.

As Uspensky’s reflections suggest, the peasant’s death is celebrated throughout Russian realism as a hallmark of unity, be it a national culture (“how wondrously Russian peasants die!” as the narrator of Turgenev’s *Zapiski okhotnika* exclaims), a religious one, or even a political force (the peasant’s celebrated “endurance” among populists). It perhaps the most central conundrum of realism that the very fact of transience is transformed into something stable. “Life itself,” like a master unquestioningly obeyed, was, it was hoped, guided by an invisible code. This remained true even for the materialists of the 1860s who rejected religion. In realism, literature, too, was “suited to anything.” With the break-down of genre hierarchies and the ongoing critique of romantic idealism, realists stressed that everything could be the object of art. As we shall see, the peasant represents this openness not, as one might suppose, for his inclusion in artistic representation, but rather for his symbolic meaning in the cultural imaginary. Realists were grappling with the belief that everything, from trends to ideals, must die. And yet, it was hoped, the peasant’s quiet death symbolized continuity. Here, the promises of religion and of idealism are guarded by an apparently bullet-proof realism: the awareness of one’s own passing. This was the last bastion against history as the never-ending dissolution and replacement of so many forms.

The peasant’s quiet death thus enshrines realism’s central aim: to gather all the benefits of idealistic modalities—a here-and-now that is immanently significant, a coherent subject that knows its own failure, a voice projected onto an imagined whole—and none of their trappings, including, most centrally, an unscrupulous obedience and passivity that Uspensky attributes to Platon. In *Vlast’ zemli*, Uspensky reflects on this central aim of Russian realism and expresses a concern that all the writers under study also express. For him, the peasant becomes another fractured self, distinguished only by the fact that he seems to know of his own nothingness and threatens those who have made him in their image with the same self-obliterating awareness. More than the imagined brutality of premodern ways of life, could this not be modernity itself?

Turning, briefly, to *Voyna i mir*, we see how Russian realism’s peasant myth is framed by an awareness of its own invented nature:

... для приезда барина везде приготовил встречи, не пышно-торжественные, которые, он знал, не понравятся Пьеру, но именно такие религиозно-благодарственные, с образами и хлебом-солью, именно такие, которые, как он понимал барина, должны были подействовать на графа и обмануть его.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 119. [This little particle dies by the masses in Shipka, in the snows of the Caucasus, in the sands of Central Asia... “His life, as a discrete life, made no sense.” This life, having no sense, loving no one separately, not itself, not others, is suited to anything that life brings...Platon would do anything. “Seize and tie them up,” “Release” “Shoot,” “Free,” “Beat,” “Beat harder”]

<sup>5</sup> Lev Nikolaevich Tolstói, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v devianosta tomakh* (Moskva/Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1928-1958), 10:105. [Everywhere preparations were made not for ceremonious welcomes (which he knew Pierre would not like), but for just such gratefully religious ones, with offerings of icons and the bread and salt of hospitality, as, according to his understanding of his master, would touch and delude him.] Translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, *War and Peace* (New York: Vintage Classics, 2008), p. 331.

This passage describes a display presented for the novel's protagonist, Pierre, to convince him that his serfs are quite happy. (He had wanted to liberate them.) For a reader who traces the patterns of the novel's plot, however, the chief steward becomes none other than the author himself, though he may also find himself in Pierre's seat in the audience, touched and deluded by Karataev. For the realists under study, "ceremonious welcomes" (read: conventions) will not delude them, but something "more grateful" will. As for readers, few scenes beckon our affirmation as emphatically as Platon's:

— Что, как твое здоровье? — спросил он [Pierre].  
— Что здоровье? На болезнь плакаться — Бог смерти не даст, — сказал Каратаев, и тотчас же возвратился к начатому рассказу. <...> Не самый рассказ этот, но таинственный смысл его, та восторженная радость, которая сияла в лице Каратаева при этом рассказе, таинственное значение этой радости, это-то смутно и радостно наполняло теперь душу Пьера.<sup>6</sup>

As we read of Karataev's calm presence and untroubled forgetfulness, it is hard not to stare at his literary visage in the same way Pierre beholds him here, as a character. It does not really matter what he says, but only that he, this emblem of another life, exists in our novels and in our worlds.

### *Form and Content: A Hegelian Approach*

For Lukács, the peasant is internal to modern literature yet also the oppositional force which makes its distinguishing features intelligible. Though Mikhail Bakhtin is more skeptical about the peasant's quiet death,<sup>7</sup> he, too, regards the peasant as a vestige in the modern novel, one preserved from its long history, but still enabling a juxtaposition of the sort which Lukács underscores.<sup>8</sup> The modern novel, as Dorothy Hale has shown, is a genre often distinguished by critics for its expression of a coherent or alienated subject. It is thus closely associated with the

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 12:153-5. ["So, how's your health?" he [Pierre] asked. "My health? Lament for your sickness, and God won't grant you death," said Karataev, and he went back to the story he had begun. <...> It was not the story itself, but its mysterious meaning, the rapturous joy that shone in Karataev's face as he told it, the mysterious significance of that joy, that now strangely and joyfully filled Pierre's soul.] Peaver and Volokhonsky, *War and Peace*, pp. 1061-3.

<sup>7</sup> "A 'man of the people' appears in the novel as the one who holds the correct attitude toward life and death, an attitude lost by the ruling classes (Platon Karataev in Tolstoy). More often than not, his teaching is concerned precisely with dying well (Tolstoy's "Three Deaths")." *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 235.

<sup>8</sup> In a new "realist turn" scholars, reconsidering realism, locate a preoccupation with peasants in the work of Lukács, Bakhtin, and Erich Auerbach. The idea is that this preoccupation (an attention to otherness) bears commonality with the post-colonial and post-imperial world and the critical resources its concerns have yielded. Joe Cleary writes: "All three of these great synoptic histories of realism ... were written not from the vantage of the great metropolitan capitals of the old literary world-system but from that of the revolutionary semiperiphery of a literary world-system in the grip of a convulsive crisis." He continues: "Neither Auerbach nor Lukács nor Bakhtin has much to say about imperialism as such. All three discover various resources in realism (its receptivity to subaltern communities hitherto ignored or merely ridiculed in high literature; its capacity for capturing intensive totality; its openness to temporalities of becoming and to the dereifying laughter of the folk) that they value and wish to transmit to the literature of the future." "Realism after Modernism," *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol 73, No. 3 (2012), pp. 257-60.

value-category of reflection, which I find across the genres of Russian realism: the alienated subject gazed upon but did not fully participate in life. Materialized, on a formal level, by devices of point of view and expressions of lyric subjectivity, reflection is discussed in cultural texts of mid-century Russia as the distinctive burden of the education elite. By contrast, a value category of immediacy is linked with a social experience, that of the peasantry, toward which realist texts gestured but could not embody.

Cultural texts of this period insist, often too emphatically, on the gulf that separates the educated elite from the peasantry. Reduplicating the binary—the peasant is Other to the writer just as that writer is Other to the west—leaves an important question unanswered: what is this binary doing in the first place? I begin by probing that binary's function in the texts that helped construct it. In each chapter, I suggest how peasant immediacy draws dangerously close to elite reflection so that the difference is collapsed into striking combinations: an eternal present that is inextricable from the conventions that make it intelligible; characters who are subject to fate but are aware of their agency; poets who are trapped in their conventions but, for the same reason, embody the physical and social limits of immediate existence.

As studies of realism as a historical movement in the nineteenth century have shown, contrast is its distinguishing element. Realism is based in negation and contrast, defined by the collapse of romantic ideals, the critique of inherited literary models, and irony, as well as contrasts between the general and the particular, the individual and the type. Highlighting contrast itself as the distinctive element of Russian realism, I follow what Marshall Brown describes as a Hegelian approach to the movement across its nineteenth-century varieties. In this approach, differing theories of nineteenth-century realism are united in an emphasis on “silhouetting”: one object emerges against the backdrop of its opposite.<sup>9</sup> Also central to my approach is the work of Catherine Gallagher, who studies one essential contrast, the type versus the individual, and that of Hale, who studies point of view as an emblem of the subject that is constituted through relationships.<sup>10</sup>

In studies of Russian realism, I draw on the work of Lidiia Ginzburg, who offers an intellectual history from early nineteenth-century German philosophy to Russian thinkers as they began engaging in psychological self-analysis and exploring key oppositions of self and other, real and ideal.<sup>11</sup> This latter opposition can be traced through a longer history of mimesis, described by Stephen Halliwell (also in terms of contrast) as moving between two distinct poles: “one [conception of mimesis] is committed to illuminating a world (partly) accessible and knowable outside art <...> by whose norms it can be tested and judged. The other is mimesis as a world created and invented by the artist.”<sup>12</sup> My approach to realism is clearly historical, yet I also understand the circumstances to which it responds as overlapping with broader nineteenth-century changes, defined by the collapse of ideals (religious and romantic) and a scientific or positivistic approach to culture.<sup>13</sup> With these contrasts in play, Russian realism is defined by the

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<sup>9</sup> Marshall Brown, “The Logic of Realism: A Hegelian Approach,” *PMLA*, 96:2 (1981), pp. 224-241.

<sup>10</sup> Catherine Gallagher, “The Rise of Fictionality,” *The Novel: History, Geography and Culture*, ed. by Franco Moretti (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 336-363.

<sup>11</sup> Lidiia Ginzburg, *Literatura v poiskakh real'nosti* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1987), p. 6. In English, this argument is elaborated in *On Psychological Prose*, trans. Judson Rosengrant, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> René Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism*, ed. by Stephen G. Nicholas (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 225-8.

emergence of reality as a problem, moving between critique and belief, surface and depth, self and other; in this period, reality becomes “a challenge or an enigma.”<sup>14</sup>

In the 1830s and ‘40s, when the fervor of Russian Hegelianism, marked by idiosyncratic interpretations, was in full swing, another problem arose.<sup>15</sup> The peasant emerges as a problem in the historical experience of serfdom’s abolition, which paralleled the development of realism. This period begins in the late ‘40s, when the manorial economy was stagnating, and it ends in the 1880s, after the last of the reforms that stemmed from abolition in 1861.<sup>16</sup> It was in this period that depictions of peasants lose the sentimental coloring that had been a mark of earlier works, as Donald Fanger observes. In the eighteenth century, writers like Alexander Radishchev framed depictions of peasants by the realization that they, too, “were men,” endowed with reason as that essential and democratizing commonality that characterizes Enlightenment philosophy. Fanger describes the transition from the Enlightenment (and later sentimentalist) approach to peasants in the 1840s, when writers began to confront the environmental realities and cultural particularities of the peasantry in new ways: “The lesson—‘This peasant is a man!’—had been urged by writers since Radishchev, and urged in terms familiar to educated readers. Now that it was accepted, the serious attention it made possible led to a disconcerting discovery: *This man was a peasant!*”<sup>17</sup> The question of the peasant’s identity was only sharpened in the reform era, beginning in the ‘50s, when society underwent drastic changes as a newly configured legal category of peasant emerged in the wake of serfdom’s abolition.

Reality and the peasant had thus become problems just as realism took shape; Pavel Annenkov’s essay of 1853, “Po povodu romanov i rasskazov iz prostonarodnogo byta v 1852 godu” [Apropos Novels and Tales from The Life of the Peasant in 1852] suggests how these problems overlapped. Annenkov criticizes sentimental portrayals of peasants, viewing them as deformations of ‘real’ peasants. More important to Annenkov, however, were the deformations visited upon the nature of art as he saw it—largely on the model of “world-building” and linked, in this capacity, to the social affordances of the educated elite. Art can only grow naturally from educated society, Annenkov argued; to resituate it among peasants is to contrive “a hanging garden.”<sup>18</sup> Realism is thus theorized in Russia’s mid-century for the first time only incompletely by Vissarion Belinsky in the late ‘30s, who hoped that “external reality could change to fit some idea.”<sup>19</sup> It receives full expression with the peasant problematic when, as Annenkov suggests in 1853, that art is defined by its opposition to the peasant. In this opposition, literature cherishes

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<sup>14</sup> Brown, “The Logic of Realism,” p. 28.

<sup>15</sup> For recent studies of Hegel’s reception in Russian culture in the nineteenth century, see the collection *Hegel in Russia* published as a special volume of *Studies in East European Thought*. Vol. 65, No. 3-4 (2013), prefaced by David Bakhurt and Ilya Kliger.

<sup>16</sup> For a genealogy of peasant stereotypes in Russian culture of the late-nineteenth century, see Cathy, Frierson *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth-Century Russia* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 76-101.

<sup>17</sup> Donald Fanger, “The Peasant in Literature,” in *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, ed. by Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968), p. 249.

<sup>18</sup> Pavel Annenkov, “Po povodu romanov i rasskazov iz prostonarodnogo byta,” in *Sovremennik protiv Moskvitianina*, ed. by A. V. Vdovin, K. Iu. Zubkov, and A. S. Fedotov (St. Petersburg: Nestor-istoriia, 2015), p. 363.

<sup>19</sup> I paraphrase Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London/New York: Verso, 2012), p. 201. “In reconciliation one does not change external reality to fit some Idea. One recognizes this Idea as the inner truth of the miserable reality itself.” Belinsky discusses his investment in “ideas” that exceed miserable reality in his essay on Nikolai Gogol’ from 1836. Vissarion Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moskva/Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1955), Vol 1., p. 262.

one kind of real, and the peasant, who (so thinks Annenkov) is without a fully developed self-consciousness, signals another. One was reflective and the other, immediate. Annenkov begins his essay with one question—why is the peasant a limit-point in art—but ends up with another, more fundamental one: how is it that reality is many things? At the heart of this question is the sense that reality’s multiple versions are dependent on one another. As Brown explains, “reality is one possible ordering of things, just as realism is one possible ordering of texts. This ordering is where everything is through its other what it is in itself.”<sup>20</sup>

Alexei Vdovin’s analysis of Annenkov’s essay traces its intellectual influences in part to Hegel’s philosophy, supporting the approach to Russian realism as “a structure of consciousness for its readers, who see the juxtapositions, and its writers who form material that way.”<sup>21</sup> Vdovin helps us see how Annenkov’s implied assumptions about reality’s dialectical nature are shared by writers like Turgenev, who represent peasants in a realist fashion by reflecting them through the categories associated with elite social experience, that is, by casting them in oppositions.<sup>22</sup> Bringing these insights together, this dissertation locates the peasant within the contrastive functioning of Russian realism and shows that the peasant harbors the meaning—at once social and aesthetic—of reversal itself. In a sense, a character like Platon Karataev underscores that a novel like *Voyna i mir*, and the reflective characters upon whom it is centrally focused, is very different from that novel and what it stands for. Yet the realization that Platon is a product of art, witnessed in the scene of Pierre’s homecoming, also suggests, first, that one version of reality, indeed this most concrete and immediate version of “the peasant,” is also invented. In such reversals, realism’s other reality—the ideas and reflective capacity which Annenkov entrusts to the educated elite—become, by their very nature as constructs, commensurate with the brutal lessons of fatalism ascribed to the peasant. Realism, a trend like any other, is doomed to quietly die.

Following the interpretative model proposed by Jameson, we might say that these inversions show the political unconscious at work. Meaning essentially that literature engages the social ground from which it stems, the unconscious, Jameson explains, “is only a way to rewrite the surface categories of a text in the stronger language of a more interpretive code.”<sup>23</sup> That code renders visible the presence of history, which is defined by Jameson as a struggle, and this makes it political. But history on Jameson’s account is also the assurance of struggle’s perpetuity, a conception that becomes clear when we extend its implicit Hegelianism. As one scholar has recently noted, although it is the “social grammar of class struggle” in *The Political Unconscious* which strikes some as retrograde, particularly amidst concerns of the post-human, the way in which struggle is articulated in Jameson’s work is so broad as to extend to “the never-ending flow of contingency.”<sup>24</sup> In the opening pages of *The Political Unconscious*, struggle is defined not as the plight of the working classes but as “wrest[ing] Freedom from Necessity.”<sup>25</sup> This view of history is also properly Hegelian. For Hegel, history is an immanent process of self-

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<sup>20</sup> Brown, “The Logic of Realism,” p. 234.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>22</sup> Alexei Vdovin, “Nevedomyi mir: russkaia i evropeiskaia estetika i problema reprezentatsii krest’ian v literature serediny XIX veka,” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, Vol. 141 (2016), pp. 287-315.

<sup>23</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 60.

<sup>24</sup> Enda Duffy, “Modernism under Review: Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981),” *Modernist Cultures*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2016), p. 151. Duffy places Jameson alongside Gilles Deleuze, the latter critic enjoying contemporary attention in studies of new materialism and the post-human. Below, I place Jameson, similarly interpreted, alongside a version of Hegelianism which performs the same move of expanding the materialist logic to a “messier,” more plastic dialectic.

<sup>25</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 19.

overcoming which, according to some recent interpretations, has no end. Jameson writes in his own recent interpretation from 2010, *The Hegel Variations*:

As Slavoj Žižek puts it, “does not Hegel’s *Phenomenology* tell us again and again the same story of repeated failure, of the subject’s endeavor to realize his project in social substance?” Yet from another perspective what is crucial about contradiction is that its very emergence signals the interiorization of the opposites, which no longer confront each other in external and contingent ways. This interiorization might then be grasped as a kind of historical progress from Hegel’s perspective, although it is surely to be understood as a structural rather than a teleological (let alone a cyclical) movement. I propose that, with the hindsight of Marx’s dialectic in *Capital*, we understand this progression in the sense of enlargement, as of a spiral rather than a circular or cyclical process.<sup>26</sup>

History does not end, Jameson goes on to explain, but it may get bigger—first in the moment of imperialism, now in globalization. It is the nature of things to be sourced from myriad places in a vast network. One way to historicize this situation is to trace the degree to which it is recognized or obscured. Behind Marx’s materialization of this process, then, is the Hegelian insight that what seems *right here* is really *over there*—a fact of consciousness as much as anything else. Relationality and reversal is what I argue lies behind history as “the absent cause,” symbolized by the peasant’s image, in Russian realism.

In recent work, Gayatri Spivak contends that to learn to read literature is to say “yes, yes!” to such scenes as those of peasant life in Russian realism if only to also eventually say “no,” and even, we might add, hold affirmation and suspicion in the same breath.<sup>27</sup> In response to calls to reorient literary scholarship in a “post-critical moment,” that is, to relinquish an attitude of suspicion in order to attend to “what the work means in the reading chair,” I echo the claim that “we have not been critical enough.”<sup>28</sup> Behind this claim is the supposition that only with attention to literary forms can we access a text’s complex engagement with its social world without reducing literature to its context. “The text is an ideological,” Jameson writes, “but formal and immanent—response to historical dilemmas.”<sup>29</sup>

In Jameson’s account, history comes to us through its textualizations, or rather, its retextualizations. Harboring no specific content but only the form of necessity itself, history is only reconstructed through the texts which respond to it but is itself a text in the sense that it is one form, one way of arranging things, among others. Nevertheless, history is the singular horizon of interpretation for Jameson for the same reason that it is Hegelian; it is not a reified mode of production but an ongoing narrative which, in all of its guises, had to be the way it was. As a literary scholar, one cannot avoid the historical lens not because one must address certain nuances of Russia’s nineteenth century, but because the structure of every text is a response to, and recreation of, what it could not escape. In this broader view of history, interpretative appeals to a political unconscious or a social imaginary, that is, “a shared, spontaneous understanding of

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<sup>26</sup> Jameson, *The Hegel Variations: On the Phenomenology of Spirit*, (London/New York: Verso, 2010), pp. 114-5.

<sup>27</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 47.

<sup>28</sup> Anna, Kornbluh, “We Have Never Been Critical: The Novel as Critique,” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* Vol. 50, No. 3 (2017), p. 399.

<sup>29</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 139.



how society is organized,” do not yield secreted answers.<sup>30</sup> Nothing is revealed by interpretation except the revelations which literature itself happens upon through the machinations of its forms.

Although an analysis of literary forms is crucial to the theoretical paradigm Jameson outlines, he leaves room for further formalist elaboration. In this gap, an approach which traces literary forms as persisting throughout time according to their own internal logic can help elaborate the ties between the past and the present that form the major promise of Jameson’s method: “to respect the specificity and radical difference of the social and cultural past while disclosing the solidarity of its polemics and passions, its forms, structures, experiences, and struggles, with those of the present day.”<sup>31</sup>

Recent work in a paradigm of historical poetics, established by a tradition preceding Russian formalism, has made further inroads into the barrier separating historicist and formalist models of literary criticism.<sup>32</sup> Far from treating texts as “windless enclosures” distinct from the social experiences from which they arose, formalism, as Jameson himself admits, “showed us how to reconstruct a given complex form—generated to compensate for some structural lack.”<sup>33</sup> A structural lack—say, the need to motivate acts of perception in the plot—dynamically interacts with social-historical need. More than recovering historical process within a text by attending to how it was made, formalists—and here one thinks of Boris Eikhenbaum’s interpretations of Tolstoy’s work as the rejection of romantic styles—also reconstitute the creative process that takes place, as it were, between texts. The creator is thus to some extent de-individualized and resituated in the shifts between one major movement to the next. Ruptures yield insight into an underlying machinery, cutting across individual texts and bridging between historical periods. The work of formal analysis thus stands to show how each historical stage is layered within previous stages and carries into “what the work means in the reading chair.”

In what follows I argue for a history of Russian realism from within the three concentric frameworks proposed by Jameson but attempt to focus on form with consistency and in its own historical perspective. These frameworks are as follows: political history (e.g., emancipation reform); society’s constitutive tensions (e.g., master and serf), and history “in its vastest sense,” the destruction, transformation, and continuation of so many historical stages.<sup>34</sup> I analyze the genesis of complex forms within and across texts, focusing in particular on the emergence of character from type, shifts from first- to third-person narrative perspective, and changes in lyric subjectivity. At every level, especially the last and broadest, the peasant myth tokens the project of realism as only form could express it: to get outside history and, simultaneously, to submit to the annihilating forces for which history ultimately stands. History’s formulation is concrete,

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<sup>30</sup> Kliger uses the term to describe Russian literature’s engagement with social and political questions. The term comes from Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2004). Kliger, “Hegel’s Political Philosophy and the Social Imaginary of Early Russian Realism,” *Studies in East European Thought*, Vol. 65, No. 3/4 (2013), p. 190. One difference between social and political, as Kliger points out, is that the former is concerned with dealing with arrangements in their current form, where the political focuses on the powers that originally implemented such arrangements or might change them.

<sup>31</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 18.

<sup>32</sup> Ilya Kliger and Boris Maslov, “Introducing Historical Poetics: History, Experience, Form,” in *Persistent Forms: Explorations in Historical Poetics*, ed. by Kliger, Maslov and Eric Hayot (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), pp. 1-36.

<sup>33</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 42. Cf. Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 75.

though perhaps not in the way that was hoped. Instead of sealing off contradictions, the peasant-as-form does what form does best: reveal them.

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Elaborating on the function of the peasant's quiet death in a world contrasted to it, Lukács calls the peasant in Tolstoy's novels "an aesthetic concept," moving toward a correlation between form and peasant upon which this dissertation builds:

The few characters who are capable of really living their lived experiences—perhaps Platon Karataev is the only such character—are, of necessity, secondary characters: events leave them unchanged, their essential nature is never involved in events, their life does not objectivize itself, it cannot be given form but only hinted at, only defined in concrete artistic terms in contrast to the others. They are not realities but marginal aesthetic concepts.<sup>35</sup>

In a sense, it would seem that the peasant's only reality is in the text. This substantial and concrete social form emerges only with sustained aesthetic thinking, and even here, it appears as a flash. Lukács appeals to the category of an aesthetic concept because the ideas which are the peasant's burden to express are meant to describe literature itself. Although literature, on Lukács's account, seems lost to whatever it is that the peasant has, he also claims that only the novelist can—from his novelistic vantage point—give us what "reflective" subjects otherwise lack: the ability to truly live our own lives. A truly lived life is performed by the novel that knows both the life of reflection and that of immediacy, though that same novel mourns the union it performs. Readers can, nevertheless, pick up a book and experience what only Platon Karataev, who has no need of books, can embody.

If Lukács's sense of mourning has faded from contemporary criticism (outlived, perhaps, in so many ideological critiques), a sense of triumph has not. Robert Kaufman outlines one way in which we continue to think about art as performing what we cannot otherwise sustain, namely, "a capacity to reach intellectually and affectively beyond the authorized concepts of capitalism," or, we might add, any given historical condition.<sup>36</sup> In a related vein of scholarship, one concerned with the epistemological purchase of literary forms, John Gibson claims that literature establishes the conditions for knowing and thus lays bare the parameters of how we think: "the contents of our minds acquire the forms of life."<sup>37</sup> Here again, literature accesses and then offers up some fundamental unity elsewhere broken into pieces, or simply working on its premises. When we appeal to this canon of aesthetic theory about the role of the peasant in realism, we may find ourselves begging the question: aesthetic thinking produces the peasant because that thinking is reflecting on itself. It would thus seem that the peasant sneaks into art to tell us what art really is: a crystallization of our realities and a pointer to something beyond them. These capacities, sometimes applied to art as such, are also those of form more specifically as 1) the

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<sup>35</sup> Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, p. 150. Within Lukács's framework, truly lived experiences are not amenable to those forms which would tear them apart, imposing false (or no longer expressive) categories of linearity and individuation.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Kaufman, "Nothing if Not Determined: Marxian Criticism in History," in *A Companion to Literary Theory*, ed. by David H. Richter (New York: Wiley, 2018), p. 206.

<sup>37</sup> John Gibson, "On Making Sense," paper delivered at the University of California, Berkeley, *Literary Form and Logic*, April 14, 2017. See also Gibson's *Fiction and the Weave of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

shape which an idea can possibly take (our determining realities), and 2) the shape it takes through innovation (possible alternatives to those realities). Freighted with the very meaning of form, the peasant, so thinks Lukács, cannot achieve form in and of itself.

To call Russian realism's peasant a form is not only to bring literature's assumptions about its own promises into focus; it is also to contravene the myth of the peasants as the bearer of content. In my chapters, I show how description, point of view, and poetic voice contribute to rendering peasant forms into various versions of content. Thus, description creates effects of immediacy, purified of distorting perspectives, and establishes an "eternal present"; point of view serves as the basis for a self-contained and self-directed life, modeled in opposition to the embodied life of the peasant; and poetic voice, moving between the poles of immediacy and reflection, is thematized in relation to the peasant other. Throughout my analyses, as much as I seek to "step back" from the canon that I have invoked in order to come at the peasant's image with more distance, I also seek to build on that canon's key insight, namely, that form intimates both what *is* and *is not*: the conditions of existence, on the one hand, and the hopes or fears that attend them, on the other.<sup>38</sup> For example, descriptive passages in Turgenev's *Zapiski okhotnika*, which are characterized by present-tense verbs and second-person grammatical subjects ('you,' attributed to readers), belie fears of social interdependence. Such fears are discernible in the evident need to render experience singular and stable. In orchestrated disruptions of descriptive pauses, however, we also sense another need, namely, to admit to social existence as part of, rather than opposed to, the forms which would escape it.

In my approach, literary form is inherently social because it insists on mediation. In that mediation, unities are broken up into their elements so that what may appear to be a self-sufficient entity, an individual, for example, is constituted by the relationships within which that individual is situated. Realist literature, in particular, is preoccupied with the project of representing, and though it seeks to overcome the inevitable distortions of that project, it is, inescapably, a fact of relationality. These are well-known parameters for any history of realism, yet they bear repeating in connection to the peasant's promises. Realists may yearn to access the whole that the peasant's image bodies forth, but, as we shall see, that whole modulates between their wish for pure content and the reality of form. Society as such, contained in the peasant's image, is "nowhere empirically present," but it is not therefore a mysterious totality; rather, it only reveals that everything contained within it is connected.<sup>39</sup>

If studies of the novel have thus far dominated my references, it is because, as Hale has argued, the novel is the privileged object for "social theories" of literature: approaches concerned to elucidate a given work's cultural function or ideological purpose. Hale shows how the novel came to be treated by critics as a genre that not only represents identity through its content, "but actually instantiates [identity] through its form."<sup>40</sup> My approach is informed by her critique of "social formalism," based on the sense that formalizing identity renders it pure, abstract relationality: hardly social at all. By externalizing sociality into the forms of literary language, we find ground for even the most "de-essentialized subject."<sup>41</sup> We also play at reconciliation without admitting to it, a habit to which Gallagher alludes when she describes the comparative ease with which we inhabit the point of view of fictional characters who, with no referent in the

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<sup>38</sup> In the context of this discussion, the term "stepping back" is Spivak's, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> I'm paraphrasing Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 36.

<sup>40</sup> Dorothy J. Hale, *Social Formalism: The Novel in Theory from Henry James to the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, 18.

real world, remain “enticingly unoccupied.”<sup>42</sup> As I have already suggested, the link between the myth of the peasant and the notion that literature can deliver a sociality that is absent to the real world is particularly strong. Indeed, literature’s deliverance of the peasant tokens precisely this notion of the social: intersubjective but disembodied – and ‘literary’ for the same reason.

In my effort to come at the social and the formal in a different way – whereby literature participates in but does not replace the social and historical experience to which it responds – I have avoided exclusive focus on the novel. For similar reasons, though subjectivity is a central concern of the dissertation, whether in the sense of point of view or as poetic voice – I do not suppose that it is the only concern that illuminates the intersection of aesthetics and social thought. As Hale suggests, the notion that “there is no truth outside subjectivity” has its origins in social formalism. The concerns which I trace in the texts under study, from social stability to historical contingency, relate to how a subject is constituted, but, as I hope to show, they are not limited to that process. In my view, the social is not couched within the literary but shared by it.

To this end, I engage a number of non-literary cultural texts, from essays by Belinsky, Nikolai Chernyshevsky and Nikolai Dobroliubov, to a study by Alexandr Potebnia, drawing them in connection to literary texts on the basis of what Jameson calls an ideogeme: “a pre-idea, conception, belief system, value, prejudice, or opinion” that is common to a certain moment. As students of Russian realism are certainly aware, a given text responds to many others – from the “trifecta” of Turgenev’s *Ottsy i deti* [Fathers and Children], Chernyshevsky’s *Chto delat’?* [What is to be Done?] and Dostoevsky’s *Zapiski iz pod’polia* [Notes from the Underground] – to trans-generic conversations between science, philosophy, and literature. As much as I attend to form, I also strive to avoid the illusion that any text is autonomous. The myth of the peasant traversed cultural discourses in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. By situating texts within this broader discourse, I explore both how they respond to and what they reiterate from the wider social imaginary. In each case, non-literary texts also reveal matters that are integral to literary form: nationalist discourses generate imperatives of immediacy and particularity; trends in aesthetic thought describe the need to establish reflective distance; views on language assume reflective and immediate social functions.

In what follows, I suggest that the peasant’s image emerges everywhere in Russian realism not because it is simply the case that the peasant’s way of life offered an alternative to modernity, because there were social and historical reasons for positing that it did. Pulling apart the myth of the peasant into the many values that comprise it, I have found myself surrounded by the concepts and the values of realism itself, from national identity to irony and critique. These larger themes and structures, I argue, stand to be illuminated by the form they consistently took. In this way, I seek to build on nineteenth-century Russian cultural studies which explore crucial connections between representations of peasants and such themes as religion and nationalism, offering a perspective grounded in the features of realist aesthetics.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Gallagher, Catherine. “The Rise of Fictionality,” p. 351.

<sup>43</sup> Many works of cultural history that treat Russian nationalism describe the mystique of peasant life. In the 1840s and ‘50s, the Slavophiles (writers such as Ivan Kireevsky and Konstantin Aksokov) made that mystique the core of their beliefs. One can find the articulations of their views in the vast scholarship on Slavophiles, including the classic accounts of Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles: A Study of Romantic Ideology* (Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1965) and Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: A History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). For a recent exploration of one central correlation between the peasant’s image and national identity, namely, the sense that deprivation/lack could be transformed into potential or “a blank slate” for an untold future, see Christopher Ely, *This Meager Nature: Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009). Many studies

## Historical Parameters

Though backwardness remains a commonplace in histories of mid-century Russia in relation to the state of the peasantry, the claim that the culture of the educated elite can be reduced to the cultural products of the West—even as they lived a different reality—leaves us unsatisfied. Bella Grigoryan answers to this need in her recent work on noble identity in literature of the period, bringing to bear the specificities of Russia’s own social history on its culture.<sup>44</sup> This dissertation comes at the same task from another angle.

One can hardly broach mid-century Russia’s social and political conditions without returning to the peasantry again and again. They are a central consideration for writers concerned with the serf economy, contributing to discourses on national identity, serving as the emblem of the intelligentsia’s great cause, and structuring definitions of the political order (and disorder). The peasant is everywhere an index of what Jameson calls the determinate situation that describes “the *Umwelt* or world of daily life.”<sup>45</sup> My aim in part is to resituate the peasant’s image within the social world that produced it. Still, I take seriously the resonance of this image that continues in our own times. I therefore aim for a careful navigation of contemporary imaginaries which belie wistful visions of the peasant’s “backward” world and those which had their own reasons for wistfulness—and still more for the nightmares that it veils.

In literary history, the period of 1848-1855 is known as the dark years, *mrachnoe semiletie*. Alexander Herzen coined the phrase to describe how censorship suffocated publications, and key figures were exiled or, like Dostoevsky, imprisoned, while still others had yet to arrive on the scene. Since the late-seventeenth century, Russian society was divided into estates known as *sosloviia*: set obligations to the state and (in some cases) privileges which defined different groups: peasants, merchants, nobility, townspeople, and clergy.<sup>46</sup> The obligations placed upon the peasant estate were the most onerous, from grain production to capitation tax and military service. The nobility, numbering one and a half percent of the population in 1858, had in previous centuries been granted control over serfs as compensation for their own obligations—civil or military service.<sup>47</sup> The term “serfs” (*krepostnye*) referred to peasants privately owned by nobles, but peasants living on lands owned by the state – “state peasants” – and those owned by the Romanov family – “crown peasants” – were equally restricted in their movement and paid their dues directly there. In the decades leading up to the abolition of serfdom, not all nobles owned serfs, but serf-ownership remained a marquee noble distinction. “Whatever the nobility was, it was defined by serfdom,” writes Daniel Field.<sup>48</sup>

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of Dostoevsky are also sensitive to the writer’s particular expression of the myth, tied to the mystique of the peasant’s authentic religiosity. See Linda Ivanits, *Dostoevsky and the Russian People* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011) and Nancy Ruttenburg, *Dostoevsky’s Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>44</sup> Grigoryan, Bella. *Noble Subjects: The Russian Novel and the Gentry, 1762-1861*, (DeKalb, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018).

<sup>45</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 42.

<sup>46</sup> For accounts of the *soslovie* system, see Michael Confino, “The ‘Soslovie’ (Estate) Paradigm: Reflections on Some Open Questions,” *Cahiers du Monde russe*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (2008) pp. 681-699, and Gregory Freeze, “The Soslovie (Estate) Paradigm and Russian Social History,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 1 (1986) pp. 11-36.

<sup>47</sup> Field, Daniel. *The End of Serfdom: Nobility and Bureaucracy in Russia, 1855-1861*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11.

Addressing the theme of backwardness, Field paints such a picture of a fragmented society of isolated factions ruled totally but distantly by the Tsarist state. Local government was weak and lacked independence, the judiciary system was constantly subject to administrative interference, and the military was supplied by recruits drawn from the peasantry, effectively for life.<sup>49</sup> In terms of the economy, many historians point to harsh conditions as the reason for a subsistence agriculture. Peasants worked according to a three-field cultivation system, producing low crop yields, and they engaged in land repartition in order to minimize starvation (lands would rotate among laboring units), but this a system did not readily accommodate enterprise and agricultural innovation. Because farmland was divided into small strips, for example, there was little room for advanced technologies of plowing and fertilization. Though industrialization began to penetrate Russia in the 1860s, it was only in the 1880s and 1890s that it substantially altered the economy.

Peasants remained the majority population throughout the nineteenth-century. The social historian, Theodor Shanin, found that, at the turn of the twentieth-century, nine-tenths of the population were peasants—including those who had moved into urban settings but remained tied to peasant roots.<sup>50</sup> As far back as 1972, Shanin noted that peasants comprised most of the world, and yet it is a strange fact that one needs so often to be reminded of this.<sup>51</sup> In a review of the field that developed in the 1980s, Ben Eklof restated the point: “Russian rural society, despite its distinctive cloth and pattern, is part of a global fabric rather than an aberration from a European pattern—itsself the aberration in world history.”<sup>52</sup> Sifting through a thicket of ideology, historians find in discourses stretching back to the eighteenth-century and into the early Soviet period that “peasants were found to function an inferior level,” economically, politically, or “simply as human beings.”<sup>53</sup> It ought to go without saying that, as Esther Kingston-Mann writes, “in search of survival, material well-being, wealth, prestige, power, security, respect and continuity, peasants were like people elsewhere.”<sup>54</sup> The task, she continues is not only to see others as sharing a common nature, but to see oneself as one case among so many cases.<sup>55</sup>

In 1856 Alexander II ascended the throne, relaxed censorship, and began discussions about massive reforms in the empire, beginning with the abolition of serfdom. Serfdom was “the defining institution of society, the economy and almost every aspect of life.”<sup>56</sup> It was established over the course of the preceding centuries to compel peasant to provide revenues for the state and its servitors. Serfs produced surpluses in the form of *obrok* (dues in money, obtained by selling grain) or *barshchina*, dues in labor. Though historians mark key differences between serfdom and slavery across the colonial world of the nineteenth-century, many also claim similarity between them: “Russian serfdom approximated chattel slavery.”<sup>57</sup> It was the arbitrary power

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<sup>49</sup> Field, Daniel. “The ‘Great Reforms’ of the 1860s,” *A Companion to Russian History*, ed. Abbott Gleason (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 196.

<sup>50</sup> Shanin, Teodor. *The Awkward Class: Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society: Russia 1910-1925* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>52</sup> Eklof, Ben. “Ways of Seeing: Recent Anglo-American Studies of the Russian Peasant,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Neue Folge* 36:1 (1988), p. 79.

<sup>53</sup> Kingston-Mann, Esther. “Breaking the Silence: An Introduction,” *Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia, 1800-1921*, eds. Esther Kingston-Mann and Timothy Mixer, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 7.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>56</sup> Field, *The End of Serfdom*, p. 14.

<sup>57</sup> Bartlett, “Serfdom and State Power in Imperial Russia,” *European History Quarterly* 33:1 (2003), p. 32. On the similarities and differences between American slavery and Russian serfdom, see Kolchin,

which serf owners were granted over their serfs that makes for the comparison. Owners who abused their serfs and forced them to relocate acted largely with impunity, despite laws governing the treatment of serfs, which were rarely enforced. Unlike slaves, however, peasants were included in the social fabric—a contrast to the “social death” that Orlando Patterson’s comparative history of slavery takes as its distinguishing feature.<sup>58</sup> Still, as Patterson also notes in his discussion of Russian serfdom, social exclusion worked in myriad ways. Peasants were considered part (indeed emblematic) of ethnic and national identity, but they were also often characterized in ways intended to justify exclusion from political and elite culture.

The stark binary between peasants and the westernized elite has been modified by accounts which underscore the “shifting and indeterminate nature” of social structure in general—the *sosloviia* system—and serfdom in particular: “less a system than a widely varying set of practices.”<sup>59</sup> Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter describes social identity in the mid-nineteenth-century as an amalgam of formal (e.g., juridical or state-imposed) categories and self-representation. People, she writes, do not fit into neat categories, and the historical categories dominant in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries were themselves messy.<sup>60</sup> The divide implemented by Peter I between those obligated and those obligated but compensated (roughly, peasants and everyone else) shifted according to the needs of the state.<sup>61</sup> In this framework, nobles were privileged by possessing “negative rights,” including exemption from the poll tax (which remained the peasantry’s burden), while their positive rights were defined by the obligations of others, especially peasants. In an important sense, nobles were nobles because they were not peasants.

Such interdependencies are highlighted in the account of Boris Mironov, who stands out in his insistence that serfdom was “a corporate phenomenon encompassing all social relations in the empire.”<sup>62</sup> The view is controversial in the sense that Mironov saw even nobles as just another (albeit differently) enserfed group. Less a picture of reality than a heuristic device, Robert Bartlett claims, Mironov’s conception underscores that “the regime as a whole was based on concepts of hierarchy and obligation.”<sup>63</sup> Here, serfdom is not primarily “the rights of some individuals over others” but “a general syndrome.”<sup>64</sup> Serf owners “enacted the ruler’s prerogative in relation to his lesser subjects” and—according to Stephen Hoch—systems of hierarchy in peasant society functioned similarly.<sup>65</sup> What all groups shared was a common system of power relations.<sup>66</sup> The overall picture fits with Wirtschafter’s insofar as “the structures of master and serf relations were fluid—meaning not only that enserfment, as a broader “syndrome” was

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Peter. *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987).

<sup>58</sup> Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

<sup>59</sup> Wirtschafter, Elise Kimerling. *Structures of Society: Imperial Russia’s “People of Various Ranks”*, (DeKalb, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994), xi. Hoch, Stephen. “The Serf Economy and Social Order in Russia,” ed. M. L. Bush, *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1987) 320. Cited in Bartlett, “Serfdom and State Power,” 31.

<sup>60</sup> Wirtschafter, *Structures of Society*, p. xv.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, p. xii.

<sup>62</sup> Mironov, Boris. *A Social history of Imperial Russia, 1700-1917*, 2 volumes, trans. Ben Eklof. (Oxford: Westview Press, 2000). Discussed in Bartlett, “Serfdom and State Power,” pp. 34-5.

<sup>63</sup> Bartlett, “Serfdom and State Power,” p. 35.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>65</sup> Bartlett, “Serfdom and State Power,” 37. Hoch, *Serfdom and Social Control in Russia*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987).

<sup>66</sup> Shanin, *The Awkward Class*, p. 25.

applicable to both, but also that hazily defined laws gave warrant to ad hoc implementation.<sup>67</sup> The “private, customary, and unenforceable” relation between master and serf is at times romanticized as a natural bond, but it also suggests a lack of stable social identity.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, though the cultural divide between the westernized elite and peasants is certainly evidenced, so too is the insistence on that divide as a strategy for lending noble identity coherence.<sup>69</sup>

Central to literary histories is the phenomenon that brings the issue of noble identity to bear in a different way: the stratification of educated society with the inclusion of “men of different ranks.” Eikhenbaum, for example, sees Tolstoy’s social anxieties resting primarily here: in the need to differentiate the nobility from the so-called new men. Historians point out that the nobility’s animosity toward non-hereditary nobles—bureaucrats and functionaries who obtained their status through service—had long been a commonplace. Still, these animosities intensify in the mid-nineteenth century in relation to the peasantry. To paraphrase Eikhenbaum, Tolstoy leads us to believe in *Anna Karenina* that “nobody was closer to the truth than Levin alone with his peasants”—not the service nobility, not government functionaries, and not the intelligentsia from whom, Eikhenbaum also points out, Tolstoy worked so hard to distance himself, even as he engaged in their trends and projects (including peasant education).<sup>70</sup>

Threats to noble identity—and indeed the social structure as such—only heightened in the period known as the reforms, 1855-1864. The stagnation of the serf economy, it is often said, was brought to the state’s attention in the defeat of the Crimean War (1853-56). Regardless of the reasons for the emancipation reform, only small numbers of the nobility actively supported it.<sup>71</sup> Nobles “shared a culture oriented toward Western Europe, where serfdom had disappeared” and often denounced it.<sup>72</sup> Thus, Field claims, “serfdom had no ideology,” but he also shows that it was not resisted because “it shaped the nobility’s outlook on agriculture and on life.”<sup>73</sup> What this picture highlights is a concern for stability. For those who abided by a logic of stability, even acknowledging the weaknesses of serfdom proved the need to maintain it. For example, one might claim (as many did) that overburdened peasants and a floundering nobility could not withstand a major structural shift, even for their mutual improvement.

For other social identities within the educated elite, the reforms bolstered a new degree of legitimacy. In the 1840s, according to Abbott Gleason, educated society was liberalized, lost its air of elitism, and was increasingly defined by its challenges to aristocratic values in the 1860s and those of the autocratic state.<sup>74</sup> On pace with the liberation of serfs into a new and undefined society, the educated elite “parted ways with the state” and, in the years to come, sought an alliance with the peasantry in its radicalized political agenda.<sup>75</sup>

The reforms, as is well known, proved disappointing. With abolition, the arbitrary power of owner over serf was revoked—a massive change—yet other defining features of serfdom continued, including economic dependence of peasants on landowners and restrictions on

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<sup>67</sup> Wirtschafter, *Structures of Society*, p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Macey, David. *Government and Peasant in Russia 1861-1906: The Prehistory of the Stolypin Reforms*, (DeKalb, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1987), p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> Wirtschafter *Structures of Society*, p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> Eikhenbaum, *Tolstoi in the Seventies*, trans. Albert Kaspin, (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1992).

<sup>71</sup> Field, “The ‘Great Reforms’ of the 1860s,” pp. 198-9.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>74</sup> Gleason, Abbott. “The Terms of Russian Social History,” *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow, and James L. West, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 18.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p. 22.



peasant movement. Peasants effectively became renters, wage-laborers, or share-croppers. Their new status became “free rural inhabitants” but they remained isolated in a legal sense, subject to their own unique set of laws.<sup>76</sup> What is important about this shift is that the peasant—singularly defined—only came into being when the structure of serfdom collapsed the legal categories of various serfs into a new and all-encompassing category. That category developed into a problem—“the peasant problem”—in the 1870s, when the state’s policy of non-intervention in the countryside began to seem untenable given the issues developing there: a so-called “land hunger” among peasants who did not have enough land to till and suffered increases in taxes which they could not pay.<sup>77</sup>

Despite the changes of the second-half of the nineteenth-century in which this study is situated, peasants, it is sometimes said, token the persistence of unchanging social forms, such as the commune, the administration of which functioned after the reforms as before. Still, others note, the village did not remain unchanged, absorbing a money economy and increasing trade practices. To supplement meager agricultural earnings, many peasants entered a migratory labor force, working in Russia’s growing number of factories in the winter, and returning to the village in the summer to plant and harvest crops. Given these changes, threats to stability seem newly legitimized for the educated observer. In the twilight years of realism, stability is housed in the institutions of peasant society with more intensity than ever, and these institutions were particularly treasured by adherents to an increasingly dominant populist movement. Still, if the social needs projected onto peasants become more shrilly articulated, so did the anxieties and contradictions which attended them. As I hope this synopsis will have shown, the image of the peasant emerged out of concerns over stability.

In the face of instability, myths of the peasant provided elite culture everything from the comfort of religiosity in an age of doubt to the foundation for a new, utopian society in which identities without a port could find stability. Such projections are documented, for example, by Yann Kotsonis, who describes “peasant backwardness” as an ideology in its own right. Modernity, Kotsonis suggests, includes a host of changes, but its most important feature is change itself, and the attendant need to redefine the terms of authority and polity.<sup>78</sup> Amidst these changes, whoever defined themselves against peasant backwardness was not backward, and whoever could fix that backwardness, could find a place for themselves in a new society, whatever it was to be. The fight over the peasant, a silent space in elite culture in which so many voices could echo, thus establishes a common image, one vested with stability, legitimacy, and coherence but, this dissertation argues, also tokening contrasting realities: shifting positions, interlocking identities, and vulnerability. It was not the loss of a receding world toward which the peasants of Russian realism gesture, but the enduring outlook of the current one.

I have drawn on social histories to ground this study in a dynamic difference between social experience and literary expression, and to help create some distance from the pull of the texts under study that proves so enticing. My focus, however, is just such a pull, to which we now might relinquish ourselves, tracing not what those texts might offer on the surface, but the subterranean needs they express with those offerings. In this study, the indirect and formal expression of needs including stability and legitimacy provides unique access not to a specific historical moment per se, but to those threads that persist within literature, somehow still living.

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<sup>76</sup> Macey, *Government and Peasant in Russia*, p. 8

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>78</sup> Yann Kotsonis, *Making Peasants Backward: Agricultural Cooperatives and the Agrarian Question in Russia, 1861-1914* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p. 11.

## *History's Present*

Drawing together the social imaginary of Russia's mid-nineteenth century and that of our own, the status of the peasant suggests a persistent thread from one to the other. For the impulse to interpret the scenes of peasant life in Russian realism in the same spirit offered by the works themselves remains a powerful one. If the early Lukács seems a special case in his attachment to the agrarian myth, Jameson, a more recent exemplar of dialectical criticism, builds on Lukács's idealized vision. Though Jameson's example is adjacent to the Russian pastoral, the sentiments are very much the same:

In Conrad, owing to the coexistence of capitalism and pre-capitalist social forms on the imperial periphery, the term value is still able to have genuine social and historical substance; it marks communities and ways of life which still, for another moment yet, exist, and have not been reduced to the icons and melancholy images of the mainstream of religious aestheticism.<sup>79</sup>

Such is the hope that, somewhere, there exists a "genuine social substance" to what is otherwise only imaginable in the abstract. In Russian studies, too, interpretations of the cultural trope of the peasant's "undefinability" often follow the established arc of the period's values, which elevated undefinability as an escape from the strictures of rationality, secularism, and language itself. Thus, on these accounts, peasants index literature's ability to intimate realities in excess of the sensible and even of the social. Literature, it follows, escapes the social, just as peasants escape at least its modern varieties. In deconstruction, the effort to isolate the excluded other amidst the homogenizing forms of language also risks configuring that other as the new (unspeakable) ideal. Some years ago, Spivak pointed out that intellectuals who see their task as knowing or disclosing the other are complicit in the continued silencing of that other and often fail to recognize it as a shadow of themselves: "'The peasant' is marked only as a pointer to an irretrievable consciousness. As for the receiver, we must ask, who is the real receiver of the insurgency?"<sup>80</sup>

Spivak's question is as applicable to Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Nekrasov as to their readers more than a hundred years later. For these writers, "the peasant" points forward or backward to a different life. For readers, the peasant's image often indexes modes of expression beyond realism or even beyond language. For Lukács, that image suggests the unattainable state of the epic, and for others, it marks the limits of knowing. Given the force of its pull on the contemporary imaginary, the peasant's image may serve as a locus for returning to the promise of Jameson's method, to "respect the specificity and radical difference of the social and cultural past while disclosing the solidarity of its polemics and passions, its forms, structures, experiences, and struggles, with those of the present day."<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, pp. 253-4.

<sup>80</sup> Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), p. 287. Ernesto Laclau describes a similar silencing of the other in discourses of populism: "...one difference, without ceasing to be a particular difference, assumes the representation of an incommensurable totality. In that way, its body is split between the particularity which it still is and the more universal signification of which it is the bearer. ... Given that the embodied totality or universality is, as we have seen, an impossible object, the hegemonic identity becomes something of the order of an *empty* signifier, its own particularity embodying an unachievable fullness." *On Populist Reason* (New York/London: Verso, 2005) p. 70-71.

<sup>81</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 18.

J. A. Ogden<sup>82</sup> highlights one telling admission of Dostoevsky's from *Dnevnik pisatel'ia* that suggests the degree to which nineteenth-century Russian writers were conscious of the myth they produced and, relatedly, the ways in which their conversations continue to echo in the present:

И однако же, народ для нас всех – всё еще теория и продолжает стоять загадкой. Все мы, любители народа, смотрим на него как на теорию, и, кажется, ровно никто из нас не любит его таким, каким он есть в самом деле, а лишь таким, каким мы его каждый себе представили. И даже так, что если б народ русский оказался впоследствии не таким, каким мы каждый его представили, то, кажется, все мы, несмотря на всю любовь нашу к нему, тотчас бы отступились от него без всякого сожаления.<sup>83</sup>

Dostoevsky's comments, it should be said, stem from his efforts to use the peasant's image as he always had, that is, an emblem of "living life" to be wielded against "theory" of all sorts, "those still-born among us, who will soon find a way to be born from books."<sup>84</sup> By way of contrast, the peasant was "value with social substance," as Jameson phrases it. Dostoevsky's pronouncement exemplifies one quintessential way in which Russian realists relied upon the peasant as the grounds for rejecting all forms, be they literary, political, or social, as merely conventional. It also suggests the ways in which that device worked only too well, revealing those "lovers of the people" as so many theorists.

In the passage quoted above, Jameson describes "precapitalist forms" as existing "for another moment yet," underscoring a sense of transition that perfectly captures the sentiments attached to the life of the peasant in the social imaginary of mid-century Russia. This is true even for Turgenev, whose narrator in *Zapiski okhotnika* enters the idyllic countryside (still under serfdom) to find that its promises are lost to an ever-receding horizon. As Raymond Williams warns, the organic community of the countryside has been pronounced terminally ill as far back as one likes, to the fifteenth century, thence to twelfth, and beyond. "Where indeed shall we go before the escalator stops?"<sup>85</sup> Such is the mirror-image of progress: a never-ending rummaging in the past for an ideal which, for some reason, must be located there.

This dissertation will dwell on what "for another moment yet" meant to the writers under study: various escapes from realities that are only more starkly realized in those escapes, including social interdependence and alienation. Here, that sentiment's resonance in more contemporary criticism introduces my concerns from a methodological perspective. First, while this dissertation is not a history of the years surrounding serfdom's collapse, those histories do

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<sup>82</sup> J. A. Ogden, "The Impossible Peasant Voice in Russian Culture: Stylization and Mimicry," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (2005), p. 536.

<sup>83</sup> Feodor Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1972-84), Vol. 22, p. 44. [For all of us the *narod* remains a theory and continues to puzzle us. We all, lovers of the *narod*, look upon it as a on a theory, and, it seems, not one of us loves it as it is in fact but only as we imagine it, each to ourselves. And it's even so that if in the future the Russian *narod* turn out to be something different from what we had imagined, then, it seems, we all, regardless of all our love of it, would immediately distance ourselves with no regret.] Ogden's translation, op. cit.

<sup>84</sup> I refer to the conclusion of *Notes from the Underground*. "Мы мертворожденные, да и рождаемся-то давно уж не от живых отцов, и это нам всё более и более нравится. Во вкус входим. Скоро выдумаем родиться как-нибудь от идеи. Но довольно; не хочу я больше писать «из Подполья»..." Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, p. 179.

<sup>85</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 11.

inform its background, and in large part to maintain that to paraphrase Ilya Kliger, “no place in the world” – certainly not the estate after serfdom – “can be said to have avoided the social division of labor and the concomitant automatization of literature.”<sup>86</sup> Secondly, by offering a history of literary forms, my aim is to consider the myth of the peasant as a feature of realist aesthetics, and thus to understand that myth not only as a response to historical conditions, but as something generated within the internal logic of literature, defined as a store-house of the past and an imaginative exercise in entertaining what may lie in the future. As Dostoevsky declared, these were the temporalities of the peasant, “the question on which our whole future rests,” but they are also those ascribed to literature by critics to this day.<sup>87</sup> In this combination, of historical specificity and literature’s “great time,” the peasant becomes a unique, underexplored site of Russian realism’s encounter with itself. I treat its texts as archives of a time-and-place and as something much more. Literature’s “much more,” however, is not a retreat from history but an insistence on its ongoing, persistent nature.

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In Chapter One, “The Place of the Peasant,” I begin with Turgenev as a writer at the center of the major literary and intellectual influences in the late 1840s, and with *Zapiski okhotnika* (1847-1852) as an experimental work symbolizing the transformation from early to high realism. Bringing certain devices of romantic poetry into conversation with new trends in prose, Turgenev’s path-breaking cycle of twenty-two short stories formulates the imperatives of literature in the age of realism. What I call the imperative of immediacy is based on a romantic belief that visions of nature inspire imaginative connections. That imperative intensifies in the discourses of nationalism in the 1840s. As the demand to locate literature in a national tradition grew, so, too, did the need, particular to early realism, to establish epistemological certainty by mapping social landscapes. Formulated in the peasant countryside, these imperatives shaped literature into a new system, an essence more real than inherited paradigms and, simultaneously, the expression of a national tradition based in a “peasant way of life.”

In *Zapiski okhotnika*, a descriptive style in which details are valued in and of themselves (rather than in reference to plot or character) is established on the basis of this “peasant way of life,” defined as uniquely affixed to origin and to place. A conflict arises when the countryside must also be rendered knowable. I argue that a new descriptive style, one affixed to character perspectives, develops in Turgenev’s stories in parallel with the emergence of character from type. I also show that these devices are constituted in response to the failure to establish the experience of place as Turgenev envisioned it: immediate and knowable. Finally, I suggest that such an experience configures a new authorial stance, or narrative perspective, that is removed from the time and space of the characters. In parallel to this configuration, characters develop in *Zapiski okhotnika* on the basis of their unplaceability: they are unknowable types made that way by social ambitions. In this chapter, I build on the scholarship of Elizabeth Cheresch Allen, Jane Costlow, Dale Peterson, and Victoria Somoff in exploring the ways in which Turgenev develops new narrative forms. I argue that the apparent class divisions thematized in *Zapiski okhotnika* are effects of a developing realist aesthetics. Turgenev is the first of many realists to celebrate “how

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<sup>86</sup> Kliger, “Historical Poetics between Russia and the West,” p. 460. Kliger discusses the similar phenomenon of using the postcolony as a site of social and political exigency lost to other social formations, citing critiques of the allegorical reading that may be balanced, he suggests, by an approach to form. I use the framework to consider romanticizations of pre-capitalist serfdom in similar terms.

<sup>87</sup> Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 22, p. 44.

wondrously Russian peasants die” (“Smert” [Death] 1848) and transform death, a metaphor for historical transience, into the basis for a national literature.

In Chapter Two, “Master and Serf,” I locate the emergence of a novelistic subject in the themes of a landowner’s life as they are developed in Tolstoy’s “Utro pomeshchika” (1856), a published extract of an unfinished *Roman pomeshchika* [Landowner’s Novel] begun in 1852, and *Anna Karenina* (1874-7). Assuming a definition of the peasant’s life similar to Turgenev’s as uniquely real and adding to that definition a vision of the landowner as uniquely pragmatic, Tolstoy develops a notion of literature that offers an “essence” correlated to life’s most practical and necessary realities. Building from this definition, I define novelistic subjectivity in Tolstoy in relation to Hegel’s famous parable of the Lord and the Bondsmans (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1807), where a certain form of self-consciousness emerges in an opposition to “life” as a medium in which that subject participates but does not merge. Exploring essential differences between Hegel’s and Tolstoy’s conceptions, I show that “life” is thematized in “Utro pomeshchika” and *Anna Karenina* through reference to a peasant myth and shifts between negative and positive valorizations: as unregulated immediacy and a celebrated sense of connectivity.

These dynamics emerge within the workings of point of view as it gives form to a subject who gazes upon life but is not fully part of it. I trace shifts in narrative perspective in “Utro pomeshchika,” where I find the beginnings of free indirect discourse, a mode of narration that exhibits a character’s interiority and thus intensifies the subject’s separation from life. Because the subject is constituted in relation to his “other” (in Tolstoy’s work, the peasant), his reality is a dependent one, and thus he needs the peasant to define himself; this context informs my analysis of free indirect discourse as a revelation, not only into the intensively interiorized subject, but into that subject’s inherent objectivity. The combination is consistently thematized in “Utro pomeshchika” and *Anna Karenina* as shame. In the later novel, shame is a leitmotif that draws together the parallel plots of Levin and Anna. In “Utro pomeshchika,” I show how the novelistic subject, whose quintessential form is the landowner hero, also thematizes an authorial persona that is able to constitute a vision of self-other unity that does not entail comprising itself as a subject removed from life. In *Anna Karenina*, I argue that the peasant nightmares of Anna’s plot suggest an alternative form of unity glimpsed in the master and serf encounter, one which collapses their distinction rather than maintaining a mutual collaboration. Central to this alternate form is a preoccupation with death, another leitmotif in *Anna Karenina* that is illuminated by the myth of the peasant. I contend that a preoccupation with death is a preoccupation with the subject’s constitutive relationship to the forces against which it is defined. In this chapter, I contribute to scholarship that explores the relationship between Hegelian philosophy and Russian realism, including that of Irina Paperno, Ilya Klinger, and Alexei Vdovin. I also engage scholarly interpretations of the peasant myth in Tolstoy, including those of Richard Gustafson, Donna Orwin, Inessa Mezhibovskaya, and Alexei Pavlenko.

In Chapter Three, “Voice of the People,” I trace the transition from the satirical stance of Nekrasov’s lyric subjects from his poetry of the early ‘50s as they reflect a key tenet of early realism: critique, focusing on “Blazhen nezlobivyi poet” [Blessed is the Unmalicious Poet] 1853). In readings of “Poet i grazhdanin” [Poet and Citizen] (1856) and “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda” [Meditations at the Entry Hall] (1858), I argue that Nekrasov responds to another major imperative of realism that developed in the period known as the sixties (1855-1866) to maintain a stance of reflection and speak on behalf of the peasant other. Merging his earlier preoccupation with critique with this new demand, Nekrasov develops a poetics of self-critique that challenge a conception of voice as a metaphor for a unified subject. In a reading of

“Poslednie elegii” [Last Elegies] (1855), I suggest that this challenge begins, first, with an understanding of the real as inherently negative. This view was assumed by realists to be associated with fatalism, in turn ascribed to peasants and mitigated by their collaboration with “reflective” social groups who could envision a larger historical narrative. By suggesting that such wider views are possible only in death, a moment of transition between “seeing everything” and being nothing, “Poslednie elegii” challenges the viability of the elite’s reflective capacity as a social form. In his earlier work, however, particularly “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda,” Nekrasov also contributes to the myth that voice belonged to the peasant who could not speak for himself, thus maintaining a collaborative unity between immediate and reflective social forms.

The chapter traces two major threads in Nekrasov’s poetry: the unified peasant voice and the fractured, self-negating voice of the lyric subject, arguing, ultimately, that these threads merge in *Komu na Rusi zhit’ khorosho* [Who in Russia Can Live Well?] (1866-77), Nekrasov’s longest narrative poem. First establishing Nekrasov’s relationship to views of folk language in readings of “Zelenyi shum” [Green Noise] (1862) and “Korobeinki” [The Peddlers] (1861) and situating that relationship in a cultural context with an analysis of Alexander Potebnia’s *Mysl’ i iazyk* [Language and Thought] (1861), I then explore how the myth of a unified peasant voice breaks down in *Komu na Rusi zhit’ khorosho*. Perceptions of the peasant as fatalistic merge with the fatalism and self-critique of Nekrasov’s lyric subjects, a process I locate in poetic devices which materialize words and obviate their referents, and in the effects of storytelling that draw attention to how words are exchanged and transformed rather than what they mean. Rather than offering the “content” to the intellectual’s historical mission, or indeed, realism’s aesthetics, the peasant’s voice in *Komu na Rusi zhit’ khorosho* dwells on the constructed nature of forms. In this chapter, I engage scholarship that explores Nekrasov’s poetic innovations, such as that of Yury Lotman, Boris Eikhenbaum, Kornei Chukovsky, and Boris Korman. I also draw on studies that trace the intellectual history behind themes of self-critique and peasant voice in Nekrasov’s poetry, including those of Mikhail Makeev and Konstantin Klioutchkine. Finally, I engage conversations about language ideology in my comparative analysis of Potebnia’s *Mysl’ i iazyk* and Nekrasov’s folk stylizations.

## Chapter 1

### The Place of the Peasant: Ivan Turgenev

#### Introduction

In 1846, Ivan Turgenev began work on a story set in the countryside and focused on peasant characters. In many ways, “Khor’ i Kalinych” [Khor and Kalinych] (1847), reflected contemporary trends—from social typology to ethnographic descriptions of Russian reality. Other writers had treated the social landscape of the countryside, but no one before Turgenev used it as a laboratory to experiment with new forms of prose. These forms, including certain styles of description and narrative perspective, would contribute greatly to the burgeoning movement of realism.

“Khor’ i Kalinych” begins a series of twenty-two stories published as a collection (or cycle) in 1852 and remains a significant moment in Russian literary history. Prose rather than poetry becomes the object of critical and popular attention. Beginning his own career with poetry, Turgenev effects the transition to prose in part by developing the poetic theme of “the village.” In both Turgenev’s treatment and in that of the poets before him, the peasantry is central to depictions of the village as a place of lost innocence. Despite the pastness projected onto the peasant countryside, it emerges within literary traditions as uniquely present, offering its visitors an experience of immediacy. Although peasants were imagined to constitute a historical origin of Russianness, they also symbolized particularity. In the place of the peasant, there was meaning to be found in the fleeting, never-to-be repeated details of one’s immediate surroundings.

In the 1847 volume of *Sovremennik* [The Contemporary] in which “Khor’ i Kalinych” appears, readers find the village theme that would frame the cycle of stories entitled *Zapiski okhotnika* [Notes from a Hunter] in its poetic guise. In a set of nine poems titled “Derevnia” [The Village], Turgenev describes the charms of the countryside, from the sound of oak groves (an allusion to Pushkin’s 1820 poem of the same name) to wagons and haystacks. Such charms were considered artistic yet also more authentic than the products of elite culture, although they too were that culture’s product. In one poem, the speaker’s contemplative stance echoes the measured distance between himself and the countryside: “Задумчиво глядишь на лица мужиков — / И понимаешь их; предаться сам готов / Их бедному, простому быту...” [Contemplatively you look into the faces of peasants – / And you understand them; Ready to give yourself over / To their poor, simple existence...].<sup>88</sup> Already in these lines, an experience of immediacy ascribed to the village is generated by certain literary devices: a speaker is located in a specific time and place so that peasants enter into the frame. However, the reader, “you,” the grammatical subject that “looks and understands,” may also transport herself to that place simply by reading. To whom does such a place belong?

This chapter begins with the premise that literature creates “the life of the peasant,” though it also generates the longing to give oneself over to that life. This is the longing with which *Zapiski okhotnika* begins. The narrator of the stories, a hunter from the educated classes and a landowner among serfs, locates himself in the scenes of peasant life. Given such emplacement, one might expect a longing for the countryside to have been fulfilled. A poet

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<sup>88</sup> Ivan Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v dvadtsati vos'mi tomakh* (Moskva/Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1960-8), Vol. 1, p. 65. Subsequent citations to Turgenev’s *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* will appear parenthetically in the text, by volume and page number. Translation mine.

enters the place envisioned in literary tradition as lost to its members, finding there a sense of purpose and belonging. However, we discover that, in the countryside, a sense of loss only deepens the further one penetrates into it. In one scene from the stories, a peasant character expresses his longing for origin and, in so doing, gestures toward the ever-receding horizon of the peasant countryside that lies at the foundation of Turgenev's realist experiment. Like the majority of peasant characters in the cycle, Ka'syan is distinguished by his sensitivity to the here-and-now. Yet, he also comes from somewhere else:

Там места привольные, речные, гнездо наше; а здесь теснота, сухмень... Здесь мы осиротели. Там у нас, на Красивой-то на Мечи, взойдешь ты на холм, взойдешь — и, господи боже мой, что это? а?... И река-то, и луга, и лес; а там церковь, а там опять пошли луга. Далече видно, далече. Вот как далеко видно... Смотришь, смотришь, ах ты, право! (4:128).<sup>89</sup>

Thus begins a dynamic, central to Turgenev's developing narrative aesthetics, of 'here' and 'there.' Kas'yan has been torn from *Krasivaya mech'* yet the more he describes that place, the more he recreates it in the present. Reading his description, we might also imagine ourselves ascending the hill in a fantasy to which Ka'syan, too, gives himself over. Cramped and alienated though it may be, 'here' is the locus for memory and imagination. Kas'yan no longer needs what he does not already have. Place, now rendered as an experience, is everywhere: "Still, it doesn't matter where I am" [А впрочем, везде хорошо] (4:128). In Kas'yan's vision, the immediate and the particular absorb the energy of the universal, becoming a kind of heaven on earth.<sup>90</sup>

As much as the effects of place depend on the temporality evoked by present-tense verbs, they produce, first and foremost, a spatial illusion.<sup>91</sup> Place is the invisible frame that surrounds whatever events pass within it. It is, I argue, the central aesthetic value generated in Turgenev's cycle and is inextricable from the peasant characters who express it. For the hunter (and the reader) who stare into their faces, peasants are uniquely present, and, for the same reason, they offer a portal to somewhere else. In the pages that follow, I describe Turgenev's poetics of place

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<sup>89</sup> [The land's free and open there, with plenty of rivers, a real home for us; but here it's all enclosed and dried up. We've become orphans here. There, where we were, on the Beautiful Lands, I mean, you'd go up a hill, you'd go up and Good Lord what wouldn't you see from there, eh? There'd be a river there, a meadow there and there a forest, and then there'd be a church, and again more meadows going far, far off as far as anything. Just as far as far, that's how you'd go on looking and looking and wonderin' at it, that's for sure!] Translation by Richard Freeborn, *Sketches from a Hunter's Album* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 93. References to Freeborn's translations of quotes that appear in the text are included in parenthetical citation after reference to original text.

<sup>90</sup> I paraphrase Cynthia Sundberg Wall, *The Prose of Things: Transformations of Description in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 34.

<sup>91</sup> The connection between emphases on place in literature and a complicated relationship to historical time has been explored by Joseph Frank, who defines spatial form in the context of modernism as "the effort to remove all traces of time value" and provide stability. Frank locates spatial form in modernism when, he argues, "the historical imagination is replaced by myth." *The Idea of Spatial Form* (New Brunswick/London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 63-4. Frank's argument about modernism is nevertheless illuminating for the period in literary history grappling with historical imagination from its beginning in realism. Svetlana Boym's work on nostalgia offers a theory of the historical condition for modern nostalgia as "the escape from time" situated in the nineteenth century, which, she argues, was dominated by and reacted to temporalities of progress. Nostalgia "is a longing for a shrinking space of experience that no longer fits the new horizon of expectation." *The Svetlana Boym Reader*, ed. by Cristina Vatulescu, et. al. (New York: Bloomsbury Academy Press, 2018), p. 225.



in *Zapiski okhotnika*, isolating devices which create the illusion of immediacy and arguing, first, that the perspective of the hunter is an emblem of a developing literary paradigm. Newly defined in the nineteenth century in relation to national identity, “literature” is also burdened to embody elite culture, the effects (and conflicts) of which are evidenced in *Zapiski okhotnika*. By situating Turgenev’s experiment in the nationalist discourses of the period, I show the productive tensions that result from literature’s own engagement with its new demands. Not only must literature establish a preexisting tradition and a materially verified existence for a shifting cultural identity; it also must find accord with “a peasant way of life.” The two emblems of identity stand either to verify one another’s substantial essence, or else express one another as empty constructs.

Throughout *Zapiski okhotnika*, such collisions generate productive experiments in descriptive style and narrative perspective. A culture-wide “celebration of the particular” yields a descriptive style in which details are not subordinated to plots and do not project the moods of a character; rather, descriptions are valuable in and of themselves. Though correlated with a more general imperative of immediacy, description is also tasked to meet the needs of epistemological certainty. Thus, while Turgenev’s narrator is concerned to “give himself over” to there here-and-now, he is also determined to map the features of the contemporary social landscape. Particular details are thus dissolved into the social paradigms that make them intelligible. In that dissolution, I argue, particularity is lost to universality in its new, problematic configuration, namely, social order and historical time. Expectation, we shall see, impinges on experience, and the two cannot ultimately reside comfortably in the place that Turgenev hoped could unify them. In the wreckage of dislocated identities and disruptive social ambitions, descriptions become focalized by isolated characters, whereas characters, defined by their rupture from origin, emerge from types, unable to generate the familiarity on which those types depend.

Scholars have discussed Turgenev’s search for a narrative perspective in *Zapiski okhotnika*, describing the stories as productive failures in the pursuit of forms essential for such major realist genres as the novel. I build on these accounts by showing how formal needs arise from cultural and social anxieties, including the loss of stable social identities, and I argue that Turgenev’s experiment establishes a model of character as internally conflicted and socially ambitious. These forms proved central to the developing trends that would come to define realism proper; after the publication of *Zapiski okhotnika*, every new writer began with Turgenev.<sup>92</sup> After this cycle, the peasant countryside is never again so central to Turgenev’s work nor to many of the realists works that followed in its wake. Still, the imperatives and devices cultivated there establish essential structural dynamics of Turgenev’s aesthetics. Building on scholarship that traces the emergence of such forms as narrative omniscience, this chapter 1) centralizes description as an understudied form in Russian realism, and 2) argues that forms unfold within a nexus of concerns to stabilize social identity, verify national identity, and negotiate literature’s own demands for immediacy.

The seemingly simple category of place emerges in my formal analysis of perspectival dynamics and the tensions between description and plot throughout the cycle. Place is the experience of immediacy and the grounds for identity. It is a new aesthetic interest: not what (and to whom) events happen, but *where* they happen. It is, finally, a position carved out in narrative to preserve the promises of place: an authorial posture at once close to an immediate world and stabilized somewhere beyond it. Place is thus multi-faceted and ambiguous, a composite of a number of effects, from description as a mode of expression to narration as a social vantage point. At the root of the value of place as *Zapiski okhotnika* deploys and shapes it

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<sup>92</sup> Boris Eikhenbaum, *Raboty o L’ve Tolstom* (Sankt Peterburg: Fakul’tet filologii i iskusstva Sankt-Peterburgskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 2009), p. 134. Eikhenbaum describes the search for a “proximate and objective” perspective as the major problem for writers in the 1850s.

are discourses of nationalism, conditions of serfdom, and large-scale changes attributed to modernity in the broadest sense, from cultural isolation to individual alienation.

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Throughout this chapter considerations of genre bring into focus a central premise of this dissertation, namely, the interrelationship between styles of literature and ways of thinking about experience. In this exchange, some concepts are historically situated, while others travel across social conditions. I begin with Turgenev's *Zapiski*, a unique conglomeration of different genres (including, for example, elegiac poetry, ethnography, the physiological sketch, and sentimental stories) to orient this study within a nexus of change. Ralph Cohen defines genre in the way that I intend to use it, that is, as "a hypothesis about forms and their interrelations" and "a concept essential for charting change."<sup>93</sup>

To widen the scope of the study of realism beyond the novel, I echo Vilashini Cooppan's recent assessment of the genre as "new on the surface, old beneath," with features derived from processual change rather than cumulative inheritance.<sup>94</sup> Studies of the novel often build on the general tensions of nineteenth-century realism in their efforts to establish the movement as "an art form with compositional strategies of its own."<sup>95</sup> This chapter analyzes Turgenev's stories both non-teleologically and historically, considering how certain features develop from such genres as elegiac poetry and toward the realist novel without assuming that they are destined to do so. I hope to show that the affordances of the short story offer unique insight into the features of realism developed within it, including, for example, extended descriptive passages with no connection to a consistent plot.

Arguably the first of Russia's major mid-century novelists, a poet in his youth, would-be landscape painter, music aficionado, and active member of new literary groups in the 1830s and '40s, Turgenev expressed the wide range of the artistic and intellectual movements of his time. He imitated Pushkin in his poetry and experimented with writing satirical feuilletons in the manner of the Natural School, a movement which derived in part from French physiological sketches and focused on the description of social types. He also witnessed the development of related trends during his service with the Ministry of the Interior's ethnography division, which organized folklore projects and oversaw the creation of the ethnographic dictionary of Vladimir Dal', who supervised Turgenev's post. Immersed in a nationalist discourse associated with these trends, Turgenev came of age during the Slavophile and Westernizer debates of the 1840s, which crystallized the features of nineteenth-century Russian nationalism. He was exiled for two years to his countryside estate in 1849 as part of a wave of repressions in the wake of the revolution in France and was no less sensitive than the rest of his generation to the political climate of the '40s as well as its changes in the years to come. Versed in prominent intellectual influences and at the center of changes in literary style in the mid-century, Turgenev marshaled these many forces to render the first major work that generated its central devices through the image of the peasant.

For its place in literary history and its internal attributes, Turgenev's cycle clarifies what would become a central thread in realism. For the first time, peasant characters express Russian literature's engagement with itself as a developing aesthetic system premised on immediacy and

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<sup>93</sup> Ralph Cohen, *Genre Theory and Historical Change*, ed. John Rowlett (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2017), p. 48.

<sup>94</sup> Vilashini Cooppan, "The Novel as Genre," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Novel* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 24

<sup>95</sup> Dorothy Hale, "Form and Function: Introduction," *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), p. 18.

tradition and torn between the universal and the particular. Though Turgenev did not inaugurate a tradition of writing about peasants, he did begin its dialectic.

The curious staying-power of realism's claims to immediacy, highlighted in this chapter, are nowhere more evident than in the ideology infused into the peasant's image in the broadest sense. As Bruce Robbins notes in his study of servants in English fiction, criticisms of realism as an exclusionary representational system continue to demand that realism fulfill its arguably impossible promise: the deliverance of the other.<sup>96</sup> Insofar as *Zapiski okhotnika* was subject to contemporary debate regarding the authentic portrayal of peasants, the issue of representation also begins with Turgenev. It is worth noting that scholarship on colonial and post-colonial literature elucidates what Homi Bhabha calls "the transformational myth of culture as a language of the universal," but its application to the specifics of the image of the peasant in discourses of Russian nationalism, populism, and, finally, realism, are more limited, for these are distinct from the situations of colonization that Bhabha discusses.<sup>97</sup> In *Zapiski*, the peasant is at times involved in "scenes of nonsense" or is culturally unassimilable, but this incoherence is rather a function of the specific functions this image is asked to perform than of actual peasants and their cultural distance from elite culture. This distance is a fact of history, to be sure, but it is also a product of culture, as Yury Lotman and others have suggested.<sup>98</sup> In this chapter, I argue that when the image of the peasant is productive of "nonsense," it is because Turgenev's work encumbers it with the conflicting tasks of immediacy and stability, autonomy and alienation: the conflicting elements of place.

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In section one, "The Imperative of Immediacy," I introduce literature as a theme within the cycle represented by the activity of hunting and describe the devices which create the effect of immediacy, offering a reading of "Les i step'" [Forest and Steppe] (1848) as the basis for the cycle's aesthetics. Through an analysis of "Kas'yan s Krasivoi Mechi" [Kas'yan from the Beautiful Lands] (1851), I offer a framework for the rest of the chapter by showing an encounter staged between literature and the peasant.

In section two, "Discourses of Nationalism," I locate new definitions of literature in discourses of nationalism, arguing that literariness as the expression of immediacy develops in this context and establishes a central principle of realism as a literature that is beyond literary conventions. In an analysis of "Smert'" ["Death"] (1848) I show how this principle is established in reference to the "life of the peasant" as a culture abstractly defined by a manner of dying

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<sup>96</sup> Bruce Robbins, *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 8. "To insist that exclusion is built into the brute linguistic and institutional fact of who is and is not speaking is to cast doubt on the political credentials of realism, but it is also to assert the materiality of language, which is denied when realism claims transparency. ... In other words, once literary representations are no longer judged by the criterion of an impossible immediacy ... and it is acknowledged, for better or worse, that they enjoy a relative autonomy, then their inescapable literariness is no longer the sign of a monotonous exclusion ... but a becomes a medium or arena of political skirmishing, alive with the turbulent significance of moves and countermoves. Once literary representations are no longer judged by the criterion of an impossible immediacy."

<sup>97</sup> Homi K Bhabha, "Articulating the archaic: notes on colonial nonsense" in *Literary Theory Today*, ed. by Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 207-8. For insights drawn from the application of post-colonial theory to Russian history, see Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011).

<sup>98</sup> Iu. M. Lotman, *Besedy o russkoi kulture: byt i traditsii russkogo dvorianstva, XVIII-nachalo XIX vv* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo, 1994), pp. 110-11.

peacefully. Embracing life's transience, as realism claims to do, peasants also project that transience as a culture unto itself. In this way, the ever-changing present becomes analogous to a uniquely national tradition.

In section three, "Description," I analyze Turgenev's use of description in *Zapiski* as a pivotal moment in the formulation of realist aesthetics. In readings of "Malinovaia voda" [Raspberry Water] (1848) and "Svidanie" [The Meeting] (1850), I show how Turgenev's description depends on a celebration of the particular as a new version of the universal. Rather than offering particulars that are universal in their imaginative connection to readers, however, description is at times attributed to specific perspectives. Such attribution emerges when peasant characters are unreadable to the narrator and when they attempt to occupy social positions other than their own. Ambition has the effect of exposing description itself as a psychological and historical perspective, one that belongs to a romantic past. I conclude with readings of later works, "Zhivye moshchi" ["Living Relic"] (1847) and *Asya* (1858) to show how the celebration of the particular becomes lost to irony and how interiority as a distinguishing feature of character builds on social ambition.

In section four, "Narration," I turn to the question of narration, exploring how the need for third-person omniscience develops in *Zapiski* in parallel with the emergence of character. I argue that omniscience in Turgenev's later writing (and realism in general) resembles the value of place traced throughout this chapter. In analyses of "Ermolai i mel'nichikha" [Ermolai and the miller's wife] (1848) and "Khor' i Kalinych" (1847), I show how the need for omniscience is developed in several challenges posed to the hunter-narrator which deepen the tensions between social expectations and social experience. Readers are no longer entrusted with the task of judgment, and the realm of the narrator and that of the character split into irreconcilable discursive planes, one marked by dislocation and the other by embodiment.

In section five, I analyze "Pevtsy" [The Singers] (1851) as a story which unites the features of realism described throughout the chapter and expresses the conflicting demands of immediacy and stability which it highlights. Illustrating the aspects of Turgenev's style that are developed throughout the cycle, "Pevtsy" also stages literature's exit from the countryside. Finally, I offer readings of several scenes in which characters glimpse the peasant countryside in passing, including those from *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* [Nest of Gentry] (1859) and *Ottsy i deti* [Fathers and Children] (1862). The return to the village with which Turgenev launches his prose career situates characters, narrating subjects, and his own literary project in a position from which a series of conflicts unfolds. Still, the nostalgic perspectives of characters from later works reconstruct what *Zapiski* searched for but could not find. Ultimately, however, a lurch in the heart that feels like loss betrays an acknowledgment that this place is the very staging of historical dramas and the narrative forms which express them.

### I. *The Imperative of Immediacy*

In the epigraph to "Les i step'" the lines from a *poema* "consigned to the flames" introduce the cycle's premise of homecoming in elegiac tones:

...И понемногу начало назад  
Его тянуть: в деревню, в темный сад, <...>  
Туда, туда, в раздольные поля,  
Где бархатом чернеется земля, <...>  
Там хорошо .....

(Из поэмы, преданной сожжению) (4:382).<sup>99</sup>

These lines, distinguished from the rest of the cycle's narrative by their ironic attribution, nevertheless demonstrate many of its stylistic elements. If the village begins as a single point to which the *poema*'s subject is drawn, it soon expands into the scenic atmosphere which it evokes. In the process, the narrative past enters a discursive present as memories are replaced by conjured images. Grammatical subjects are increasingly avoided (as in the final line, "*tam khorosho*") while other verb phrases denote movement-in-place: the willows that cluster on riverbanks, for example, or the ground that grows dark. In such phrases, time has no significance apart from scenic changes; it does not matter *when* the willows cluster or the ground darkens. Verbs which describe coloration (e.g., *chernet'sia*) are particularly illuminating as effects that merge action and description and proliferate throughout the cycle, as in the following sentence from "Les i step": "Светлеет воздух, видней дорога, яснее небо, белеют тучки, зеленеют поля..." [The air grows brighter, the road clearer, the sky lightens, suffusing the clouds with whiteness and the fields with green] (4:383/246). Although this string of verb phrases tilts toward descriptive statements (e.g., the fields *are* green), the effect depends on the passage of time (e.g., they turn green). Temporal change is decelerated and rendered through shapes and colors but is not entirely absent. As A. K. Baboreko puts it, in Turgenev's descriptions, "you know the time of year by the sound of the leaves."<sup>100</sup> Existence collapses into the single moment that contains its own regulatory conditions. Such are the stylistic elements apparent throughout the cycle, whose cumulative effect is also signaled in the epigraph; adverbs implying action (there, *tuda*) are replaced by those implying stasis (*tam*). The receding horizon of longing thus becomes an aspect of the here-and-now.

Stepping away from the lines of poetry, the speaking subject of *Zapiski okhotnika* translates the backward, depersonalized movement of the epigraph (*nazad ego tianut'*) into the aimless wandering. He is a hunter. The endless horizon toward which the epigraph's subject is pulled invites visual and linguistic movement in the accumulation of details, but such movement also demands and cultivates stillness. I argue in this section that this combination, thematized in the cycle as hunting, defines the immediate present and is both the imperative and the condition of literature as it was newly imagined. Literature is signaled in the epigraph as the destroyed poem, consigned to the past but persistent in the ether of memory: someone has transcribed it after all. Symbolized by the burnt poem, literature occupies a place in time which is neither chronological nor eternal. It is rather a sacred essence, rejected yet remembered. The hunter circles around an imagined origin, both the village and his own literary past, and, as Jacques Rancière has written of the task of literature as it was reconceived in the nineteenth century, constantly restages that past.<sup>101</sup> Still, literature, personified by the hunter, returns to the source that it establishes for itself.

Literature is hardly definable without reference to specific texts, though Raymond Williams and others have argued that literature acquires a singular, essentializing meaning in the

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<sup>99</sup> [...Little by little he felt his desire harden, / Drawing him back to the village and the shady garden, <...> / He was drawn back to those broad fields so lush, / Where the earth like velvet is so black and lush, / <...> There it is good... (From a poem consigned to the flames)] Freeborn, p. 245.

<sup>100</sup> A. K. Baboreko, *Tvorchestvo I. S. Turgeneva: sbornik statei*, ed. by S. M. Petrov (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe uchebno-pedagogicheskoe izdatel'stvo RSFSR, 1959), p. 17.

<sup>101</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2004), p. 20. "It is within the mimetic regime that the old stands in contrast to the new. In the aesthetic regime of art, the future of art, its separation from the present of non-art, incessantly restages the past."

nineteenth century.<sup>102</sup> “Literature” becomes the values exemplified by certain works of (Shakespeare, Cervantes, etc.) and a measure of the present in relation to the past. Michel Foucault has also described this concept of literature (which he, too, locates in the nineteenth century) as “a sacred essence which makes every work not the fulfillment of literature but its rupture, its fall, its violation.”<sup>103</sup> Writers thus pursue a sacred essence by aligning themselves with a tradition (one which they themselves invent) or they may refer to that essence as they violate it. Writers may also feel themselves to be invoking a sense of experience less alienated than other modern discourses, for literature in its new conception is “an abstraction of the personal and the immediate.”<sup>104</sup> In “Les i step’,” traditions such as elegiac poetry are ‘violated’ yet are called upon to generate a lost essence. The works what supersede traditions in pursuit of their very essence emerge as all the more immediate.

Scholars have also described the nineteenth century as the time when writing attains privileged access to experience precisely in its imaginative content.<sup>105</sup> Throughout Turgenev’s cycle, these changes are suggested in the many instances in which descriptions become more immediately present the more obviously they are imagined, that is, detached from particular referents. For example, the following passage from “Kas’yan s Krasivoi Mechi” includes a seemingly endless amount of details yet is also measure and contained, creating through this combination a sense of carefully composed immediacy. This example also introduces the construction of empty perspectives through the elision of grammatical subjects. Readers are invited into the place which the language of the passage creates:

Ноги беспрестанно путались и цеплялись в длинной траве, пресыщенной горячим солнцем; всюду рябило в глазах от резкого металлического сверкания молодых, красноватых листьев на деревьях; всюду пестрели голубые гроздья журавлиного гороху, золотые чашечки куриной слепоты, наполовину лиловые, наполовину желтые цветы Ивана-да-Марьи; кое-где, возле заброшенных дорожек, на которых следы колес обозначались полосами красной мелкой травки, возвышались кучки дров, потемневших от ветра и дождя, сложенные саженьями; слабая тень падала от них косыми четверугольниками, — другой тени не было нигде (5:398).<sup>106</sup>

The feet and face of this focalizing subject belong to no one in particular. Still, the space that is described, a clearing in the woods in which the hunter wanders with another character, is mapped in various ways: flashes of light and flowers are everywhere, colors are neatly divided, and piles of firewood border a small road, casting shadows in little quadrangles, the only shadows in the scene. Ranging from everywhere (*vsyudu*) to nowhere (*nigde*) and offering concise shapes in

<sup>102</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 45.

<sup>103</sup> Michel Foucault, *Language, Madness, and Desire: On Literature*, trans. by Robert Bononno (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), p. 49.

<sup>104</sup> Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, p. 46.

<sup>105</sup> Gallagher, “The Rise of Fictionality,” pp. 336-7.

<sup>106</sup> [The feet were constantly caught and entangled in the long grass, that was parched in the scorching sun; the eyes were dazzled on all sides by the glaring metallic glitter on the young reddish leaves of the trees; on all sides were the variegated blue clusters of vetch, the golden cups of bloodwort, and the half-lilac, half-yellow blossoms of the heart’s-ease. In some places near the disused paths, on which the tracks of wheels were marked by streaks on the fine bright grass, rose piles of wood, blackened by wind and rain, laid in yard-lengths; there was a faint shadow cast from them in slanting oblongs; there was no other shade anywhere.] Freeborn, p. 130.

between, this passage traces a circle around a place and removes it from time. In such passages, the *poema* from the epigraph to “Les i step” is rendered prosaic, but its elegiac message is also not lost.

The shifts from remembering the past to reading what is uniquely present is inaugurated by an address to readers in “Les i step”: “Охота с ружьем и собакой прекрасна сама по себе, *für sich*, как говаривали в старину; но, положим, вы не родились охотником: вы всё-таки любите природу; вы, следовательно, не можете не завидовать нашему брату... Слушайте” [Hunting with a gun and a dog is a delight in itself, *für sich*, they used to say in the past. But let us suppose that you are not a born hunter, though you still love nature in that case, you can hardly fail to envy the lot of your brother hunters. Pray listen a while] (4:382/245). Just as the subject’s memories in the *poema* are depersonalized in the move from *tam* [there] to *zdes’* [here], in this passage, the hunter’s experiences become the property of readers. We are offered a hinge between the unfamiliar and the familiar through the most common of all reference points: nature.

Lyric temporality, often defined in reference to the speaking-present, is retained in the rest of this story and reappears throughout much of the cycle, but subjectivity is just as often transferred to readers, as in this sentence from “Les i step”: “Вот вы сели; лошади разом тронулись, громко застучала телега... <...> Вы взобрались на гору... Какой вид!” [You take your seat; the horses start away at once and the cart clatters off on its journey <...> Then you ascend the hill...what a view!] (4:383/247). The movement from reporting about the past to exclaiming in the present echoes the trajectory of the *poema*, offering readers no specific details of the scene (*tam khorosho*) yet creating the illusion that it belongs to them.

In the address to readers that begins “Les i step,” the hunter leads us into a place where we both have and have not been; all of us know about nature and perhaps many of us love it, but unless we are hunters, we do not actively desire it (the root of the word hunter, *okhota* [desire] highlighting the act of desiring).<sup>107</sup> Ironically referencing popularized Hegelian jargon (*für sich*), the opening address to “Les i step” clarifies that hunting is desire fulfilled by its own process of desiring and liberated from particular aims. Hunting is about the chase, as it were, and as such it does not detemporalize experience but rather holds it in limbo. Though firmly situated in experience, the nature of hunting also figures as the movement of desire, enabling its intimate connection with readers through their own version of desire. Removed from experience, that desire becomes envy. Readers, like hunters, are constituted by deferred fulfillment, a sense of lack which literature cultivates and to which it responds.<sup>108</sup>

Although the hunter is a character as well as first-person narrator, he escapes the strictures of his proper name and acquires protection under the cover of an intermediary and

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<sup>107</sup> Thomas Hodge explores the “terminology, the technique, and the moral implications of the field sport” in Turgenev’s writing, describing hunting as “a feeling not a practice” and explaining that sports hunting in particular “emphasizes the means of hunting.” “The ‘Hunter in Terror of Hunters’: A Cynegetic Reading of Turgenev’s ‘Fathers and Children,’” *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2007), p. 454. Also see Margarita Odesskaia, quoted in Hodge, p. 456: “When hunting, man contributes to the cycles that are constantly being accomplished in nature. Hunting provides the opportunity to gaze at nature from a certain remove but also participate in her life.” Margarita M. Odessakaia, “Ruzh’e i lira: Okhotnichii rasskaz v russkoi literature XIX veka,” *Voprosy literatury*, vol. 3 (1998), p. 243.

<sup>108</sup> In this context it is curious that scholars such as Peter Brooks and Victor Shklovsky theorize plot in terms of such deferral, and Shklovsky in particular uses this concept for the basis of his definition of literature, which accords with its association with immediacy: envy and desire are engaged to project a substantial reality superior to others. See Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984) and Victor Shklovsky, *Energy of Delusion: A Book on Plot*, trans. by Shushan Avagyan (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 2007).

pliable identity, occupying a place similar to readers. It is hunting that allows him to be what he seeks and nothing more: a wanderer distinguished by the fact that he has no particular quest. Hunting is also a means to accumulate experiences that readers may reconstruct. It is between these poles of anticipation and reception that immediate experience is generated as an effect of literature.

In a review of Sergei Aksakov's *Zapiski ruzheinogo okhotnika Orenburgskoi gubernii* (1854) [Notes from a Sport-hunter in the Orenburg region], Turgenev articulates a different but equally elaborate orientation of literature in relation to immediate experience. Apologizing to the editor for his delay, he explains that, as a true huntsman, he spent the summer "hardly dropping the gun to pick up the pen" but delays the review still further with descriptions (5:407). These descriptions are obviously inspired as much by his own hunting as by the work of Aksakov. One is led to believe that there is little difference between good literature and a good day's hunting. Readers familiar with *Zapiski okhotnika* may already suspect that hunting and writing are aligned. The merger is suggested by the nature of the cycle's narration: observations are not typically distinguished by such phrases as 'I saw' (witness the passage from "Kas'yan," quoted above) and thus appear to occur in the time of action, even though they are carefully composed and often addressed to readers. What happens in experience happens simultaneously in literature.

Throughout the cycle, the hunter, a lover of nature, is less fixated on his gun and its victims than on hunting's distractions. In the passage from "Kas'yan," for example, the clearing is described though no game is to be found in it. Nowhere in the cycle does the hunter scour places for game to exclude anything that might intervene or interrupt him; in fact, he is generally an unsuccessful shot. Descriptions fill the space of action, the apparently preferred outcome. In the hunter's quest for nothing in particular, interruptions are indeed welcomed, entanglements in potential plots are restlessly endured, and moments of waiting are paradoxically sought. Another example of such deferment is found in "Ermolai i mel'nichikha," where the action that begins the story is interrupted by the scene of "roding" (when grouse display themselves to mate at dusk) "Вечером мы с охотником Ермолаем отправились «на тягу»... Но может быть не все мои читатели знают что такое тяга" [In the evening the hunter Yermolay and I set off for 'cover'. But perhaps not all my readers know what 'cover' means] (4:21/35). The roding is an opportunity to crouch in the bushes and observe the amber light of evening and it is also an excuse to describe these details, in the most general sense, to the reader.

The fondness for details evinced in such scenes is paired with distraction, which is key to the hunter's elusive subjectivity. In "Kas'yan," he does not exclusively focus his attention to detail on nature but also carefully observes Kas'yan. In any case, his outwardly focused attention needs an object. The hunter is often carried as far as his observations will take him, typically imposing no filter on description. In one instance, it is the upper reaches of the sky, described from the perspective of imagined readers, which mark the limits of his vision: "и все вам кажется, что взор ваш уходит дальше и дальше и тянет вас самих за собой в ту спокойную, сияющую бездну, и невозможно оторваться от этой вышины, от этой глубины..." [and it seems to you that all the while your gaze is travelling farther and farther away and drawing all of you with it into that calm, shining infinity, making it impossible for you to tear yourself away from those distant heights, from those distant depths...] (4:124/88).

In his roving attention, the hunter externalizes himself. In this instance, however, he loses traction with material objects and is poised to reflect on himself, a consequence from which he is saved when Kas'yan interrupts with a question: "Ну для чего ты пташку убил? — начал он, глядя мне прямо в лицо" [Why is it now that you should be killing that wee bird?] (4:125/89). The question posed by Kas'yan encourages further self-reflection. For the only thing the hunter



has revealed about his identity (hunting) is here challenged. He does not take the question as an invitation to reflect on himself, however, but uses it to redirect his focus to Kas'yan.

As the epithet given to him in the title implies, Kas'yan's character is intimately tied to place. Kas'yan describes his homeland as rapturously as the hunter describes the sky in the passage above yet he also attaches himself to nowhere in particular. Kas'yan's wandering lifestyle, like the hunter's, is aimless yet principled; Kas'yan is a member of the religious sect known as *beguny*, or the runners, who reject such earthly attachments as family and economic exchange and stay adrift in order to avoid them.<sup>109</sup> Though limited in his movements as a serf, Kas'yan's wandering approximates the hunter's, drawing Kas'yan's characterization close to the literary principles formulated in the hunter's image.

The association between wandering and hunting provides the basis for a fundamental association between literary values and the image of the peasant. Kas'yan is unique among the cycle's peasant characters in the degree of insight we gain into his perspective, but in many ways, he only exaggerates (and takes a principled stand on) a lifestyle of vagrancy which typifies others. When vagrancy is not an aspect of character among peasants in the cycle (Ermolai, for example, is a vagabond), they are often encountered en route to their villages or sheltering in open spaces. Vagabonds like Ermolai are cast out from their villages. Rejecting pasts which would otherwise define them, these characters must establish an origin of their own. Still, wandering peasants are just as resistant to advances into their interiority as the hunter.<sup>110</sup> They distinguish themselves not because they assert their individuality but rather because they seem to embrace everything and resist nothing.

Despite Kas'yan's idealistic description of the places through which he has wandered (some include golden apples), his sectarian beliefs serve to legitimize his current exilic state.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> N. L. Brodskii, *I. S. Turgenev i russkie sektany* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Literaturnogo kruzhka, 1922), pp. 10-12.

<sup>110</sup> Elizabeth Cheresch Allen makes the point that "nowhere in Turgenev's narratives is there represented any coherent community whatsoever," arguing that he develops an aesthetics of psychological preservation which offers readers distance rather than community. "The peasantry he introduces to his readers tends to live on the fringe of the village or else dwell in solitude, spiritually and physically alienated from community." As will become clear in my discussion of nationalism in section two, I read this sense of detachment as a complex bid for community generating aspects of realist aesthetics which are equally foundational to the more community-centric realists to which Allen contrasts Turgenev. The difference for which Allen persuasively argues is perhaps better characterized in terms of nostalgia rather than individualism. *Beyond Realism: Turgenev's Poetics of Secular Salvation* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 34-5.

<sup>111</sup> Irene Masing-Delic reads this descriptive passage from "Kas'yan" as well as Kas'yan's own descriptions as overly idealist, the first in connection to such trends in elite culture as philosophical speculation and romantic poetry and the second in terms of mysticism. "Philosophy, Myth, and Art in Turgenev's Notes of a Hunter," *The Russian Review*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (1991), pp. 444-5. Thomas Newlin also argues that this passage from "Kas'yan" suggests that "Turgenev wants us to see it as escapist," lacking the prosaic impulse "to travel bottom, to be attached to the ground." "At the bottom of the River: Forms of Ecological Consciousness in Mid-Nineteenth Century Russian Literature" *Russian Studies in Literature*, vol. 39, no. 2 (2003), p. 80. I am suggesting that neither the hunter nor Ka'syan are entirely dismissed in their escapism but rather that the tension between two competing impulses, to describe nature and align its sensibilities with social transparency, are present in them. Anne Janowitz's argument about romanticism as an aesthetics caught between individualistic and collectivist sensibilities, a tension which arguably only continues to develop in realism, is, I think, especially helpful in illuminating the dynamics of this story as scholars have debated them. She writes of Wordsworth: "The presence of another self in the landscape is both necessary <...> and shocking to the systemic abstraction of the speaking-I. The presence of both forms suggests the project in which Wordsworth is absorbed: to outline

To some extent, his version of heaven is the here-and-now. In the passage discussed in the introduction to the chapter, Kas'yan mimics the subject of the epigraph in "Les i step" by longing for an origin which he transforms into an experience of the present:

Там места привольные, речные, гнездо наше; а здесь теснота, сухмень... Здесь мы осиротели. Там у нас, на Красивой-то на Мечи, взойдешь ты на холм, взойдешь — и, господи боже мой, что это? а?.. И река-то, и луга, и лес; а там церковь, а там опять пошли луга. Далече видно, далече. Вот как далеко видно... Смотришь, смотришь, ах ты, право! (4:128).<sup>112</sup>

How different the language in this passage is from the narrator's and yet how similar to its essential effects! 'There' and 'here' merge into an experience that elides contradictions. At the same time, the contrast between here and there effects their merger in a presence which is constituted in words. Kas'yan's experience may as well be our own: "и, господи боже мой, что это? а?.." Personal memories of specific places here transform into an empty perspective on experience itself. Like the descriptive passage in which the hunter traces vision to its farthest reaches in the sky, this passage dissolves into vision: "You look and you look, ah, yes!" One senses that there is not much beyond such gestures toward the horizon or the viewer who longs for it.

After Kas'yan begins the monologue that leads him here, the hunter stares incredulously at this inverse image of himself. Literature, faithful to the past it invents and substantiated by the present which it expresses, encounters itself as a construct. Like the hunter, Kas'yan takes his perspective as far as it will go in the pursuit of immediacy. But he also reveals the receding horizon of some sacred essence to be somewhat disappointingly ubiquitous:

А впрочем, везде хорошо. Человек я бессемейный, непосед. Да и что! много, что ли, дома-то высидишь? А вот как пойдешь, как пойдешь, — подхватил он, возвысив голос, — и полегчит, право. И солнышко на тебя светит, и богу-то ты видней, и поется-то ладнее. Тут, смотришь, трава какая растет; ну, заметишь — сорвешь. Вода тут бежит, например, ключевая, родник, святая вода; ну, напьешься — заметишь тоже. Птицы поют небесные... (4:128).<sup>113</sup>

The conclusion to the epigraph of "Les i step," "there it is good" (*tam khorosho*) is at once maintained and inverted: "but really, everywhere is good." The longing for origin is deflated. At

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a self and situate it as representative of all." *Lyric and Labor in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 18.

<sup>112</sup> [The land's free and open there, with plenty of rivers, a real home for us; but here it's all enclosed and dried up. We've become orphans here. There, where we were, on the Beautiful Lands, I mean, you'd go up a hill, you'd go up and Good Lord what wouldn't you see from there, eh? There'd be a river there, a meadow there and there a forest, and then there'd be a church, and again more meadows going far, far off as far as anything. Just as far as far, that's how you'd go on looking and looking and wonderin' at it, that's for sure!] Freeborn, p. 93.

<sup>113</sup> ['Still, it doesn't matter where I am. I'm not a family man, not tied to anywhere. And what would I be doing sittin' at home a lot? It's when I'm off on my way, off on my travels,' he began saying in a louder voice, 'that everything's surely easier. Then the sweet sunlight shines on you, and you're clearer to God, and you sin in better tune. Then you look-see what herbs is growing there, and you take note of 'em and collect the ones you want. Maybe there's water runnin' there, water from a spring, so you have a drink of it and take note of that as well. The birds of the air'll be singing...] *ibid.*

the same time, the ability to generate an experience of immediacy is recuperated from the clash of differing perspectives on it. One can find heaven anywhere, perhaps especially wherever one happens to be, or whatever one happens to imagine.

Literature's project is legitimized by Kas'yan, but two expressions of immediate experience cannot exist simultaneously, in part because the hunter is compelled to situate characters in a potential plot though he avoids emplacing himself in one. Kas'yan's daughter (so it seems) appears from the bushes, belying his sectarian principles. When the hunter presses Kas'yan about the girl, Kas'yan returns to his previous state of silence, unable to transform this part of his background (unlike his origin in Krasivaia Mech') into the experience of immediacy. By the end of the story, hunting remains the primary expression of literature as a conduit of experience with no particular object and no particular need to answer for itself. And yet we have also glimpsed its externalized, embodied ideal which the hunter takes as his own. In the social experience of peasants, that ideal involves a rootedness to place. Wherever peasants may wander (a state which is itself the result of factors beyond their control), they are also rooted to origin. Indeed, they constitute it.

## II. *Discourses of Nationalism*

The sense of immediate experience, which comes to define literature as a concept in the nineteenth century, is closely associated with the rise of nationalism. In Ernest Gellner's classic account, nationalism emerges in the nineteenth century under conditions that create an "education-dependent high culture," including literacy and standardized institutions of learning.<sup>114</sup> This culture is unique in its "exo-socialization," meaning that identities are produced outside local structures. It is also unique in its system of communication, which is established between people who have no previous association and thus use explicit rather than context-dependent language. Such a system emerges with print technology, a point also made by Benedict Anderson.<sup>115</sup> According to Gellner, this culture, an "anonymous, impersonal society of mutually substitutable individuals," required an image of itself and with the creation of this image, the mirage of the nation was born.<sup>116</sup> Gellner's account suggests how literary society might fashion itself as an autonomous sphere which it projects onto a distant past (national tradition) and simultaneously relies on that past as grounds for identity in the present:

The cultures nationalism claims to revive are often its own inventions ... [High culture] draws its symbolism from the healthy, pristine, vigorous life of the peasants, the *Volk*, the *narod*. ... [it] celebrates itself in song and dance which it borrows (stylizing in the process) from a folk culture which it fondly believes itself to be perpetuating, defending, reaffirming...<sup>117</sup>

Other historians stress the role of elite cultures in nationalism, arguing that nationalism stems from elites who claim to represent common culture. Endowing their own voices with political authority, elite cultures simultaneously transfer that authority to 'the people,' at which point the

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<sup>114</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 32.

<sup>115</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London/New York: Verso, 1983), p. 18.

<sup>116</sup> Gellner, *Nations*, p. 38.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, p. 57.

word loses its negative connotations as ‘the rabble.’<sup>118</sup> This gesture of self-projection creates an idealized image of the peasant. Following these accounts, the nationalization of literature is part of these processes. Demands to return to the countryside are part of the externalization of elite culture’s abstract and imagined community, an image created to express and sustains their values and, as Anderson stresses, the ways of imagining particular to them.<sup>119</sup>

Historians of nationalism in nineteenth-century Russia, too, support its association with educated cultures, tracing the emergence of nationalism to the development of education. Vera Tolz, for example, attributes the formulation of national ideals to the intellectuals of the eighteenth century who elevated education as their primary identity and “a source of pride beyond social origin.”<sup>120</sup> These ideals are further elaborated in the 1840s by such figures as Belinsky, who emphatically stressed the centrality of education to national identity, as evidenced by this passage from “Retsenziia na *Deianiia Petra Velikogo mudrogo preobrazovatelii Rossii I. Golikova*” [“Review of *The Deeds of Peter the Great, The Wise Reformer of Russia* by I. Golikov”] (1842): “Вообще все недостатки и пороки нашей общественности выходят из невежества и непросвещения: и потому свет знания и образованности разгоняет их, как восход солнца ночные туманы.”<sup>121</sup> National identity, according to Belinsky, depends on education which actualizes the potential of a *narod*—a word he uses to distinguish a proto-nation (associated with lower strata) from nation in its proper sense; I return to this distinction below. In this context, Belinsky’s main point is that education manifests national identity. His arguments clarify the tensions in the nation as a concept which must exist *a priori* and yet expresses the identity of the educated elite precisely *as* educated, that is, developed from some original state. For this reason, he frequently appeals to organic metaphors such as acorns which transform their

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<sup>118</sup> Liah Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 6-7.

<sup>119</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 33-5. Linguistic anthropologists arguing that language is a process of invention suggest that Anderson’s account “purchases [the constructionist approach to nationalism] at the price of an essentialist outlook on languages.” Makoni, Sinfree and Alastair Pennycook, “Disinventing and (Re)constituting Languages,” *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies: An International Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2005), p. 140. Makoni and Pennycook stress that languages are “invented” in parallel to nations, “...there is arguably no such thing as Russian, French, Spanish, Chinese, Hindi, or any other language. <...> language is constantly changing, and in flux, and thus any effort to demarcate the boundaries of a particular language are inevitably at best able to provide a snapshot of the language at a particular time and place.” (Quoting T. Reagan, “Objectification, Positivism and Language Studies: A Reconsideration,” *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, Vol.1, No. 1 (2004), p. 41.) The language debates in eighteenth-century Russia are illuminating in this regard as a veritable forum on the Russian language’s invention, a corollary (indeed essential element) of the invention of the nation.

<sup>120</sup> Vera Tolz, *Inventing the Nation: Russia* (London: Hodder Education Press, 2001), p. 47. Greenfield applies this need for identity to nobility as well, arguing that a sense of inadequacy among them was created by the vicissitudes of service for which national identity provided a salve. (Greenfield, pp. 215-222.) Tolz sees Greenfield’s argument as an unsuccessful application of Elie Kedourie’s theory that “nationalist ideas emerge when nobility becomes independent of the state but remain excluded from power sharing by the monarch,” e.g., the bourgeois. The problem for Tolz is that the Russian nobility were already fractured not particularly “in crisis” at the time of the formation of nationalism, but in her own account of the role of education she also suggests that the nobility would have valued this identity as much as non-nobles, as indeed scholarship on the intelligentsia suggest (p. 57).

<sup>121</sup> Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, p. 131. Subsequent citations to Belinsky’s *PSS* will appear parenthetically in the text, by volume and page number. [Generally, all the insufficiencies and vices of our society come from ignorance and a lack of enlightenment. Thus, the light of knowledge and education will dispel them all as the rising sun dispels the evening fog.] Translation mine.

shape but fulfill or realize their potential rather than altering their essence. Thus, Belinsky invites us to ask whether the educated man is not the same as before.

The formation of Russian national identity is also widely seen by scholars as complicated by comparisons to the west, understood as “a single, undifferentiated model” introduced into Russian culture by the Petrine reforms.<sup>122</sup> Gellner’s education-based model of national identity is helpful in approaching the dilemma of Russian intellectuals who defined themselves in relation to other high cultures. The emergence of literature as a concept distinct from imitations thus acquires new significance, evidenced by the value assumed by Belinsky when he poses the question “does Russia have a literature?” To him, the work of some writers who imitated western models was a necessary step toward literature, but one better described as rhetoric. For Belinsky, the blossoming of literature in the full sense of the word draws on preexisting cultures but constitutes out of them a self-conscious and (at least potentially) sovereign community.

The imitativeness of the genre system rejected by a wide-spread romantic movement in favor of individual expressivity is only intensified by these contradictions of Russian national identity. In his study of the relationship between the rise of Russian nationalism and changes internal to literature, David Cooper traces the shift from “historically and culturally undifferentiated literary values” associated with ancient models to new values of originality.<sup>123</sup> Originality in the romantic sense is associated with cultural and historical distinction. Rather than developing variations of a genre established by its founders, writers began to conceive of their efforts as activating a national tradition. Cooper’s exploration of nationalism in relation to literary concerns highlights not only how literature helped create the nation but also how literature came to be revalued as an essence, culturally located, and bound to the here-and-now.

The problems and attempted solutions of literature’s inherently conflicted relationship to nationality are traceable through the various meanings of the word *narodnost’* which have been well-documented. Its invention attributed Petr Viazemsky, the word entered literary criticism in the 1820s as a generic value applied to literary works. Its potential meanings ranged from popularity to folksiness, nationality, and nativeness, but it was not until the 1840s that it came to be associated with the peasantry in particular. In debates about classical and romantic aesthetics in the first decades of the nineteenth century, by contrast, *narodnost’* was sometimes used to recover the value of literary models. Pushkin, for example, argued that the best way to imitate models was to focus on new material.<sup>124</sup> In these contexts, the term negotiates demands for originality and tradition.

*Narodnost’* remained ambiguous yet gained force precisely because of its many and conflicting roles as a national culture as an image of educated society and an evaluative literary category. In 1843, Belinsky writes:

Волшебное слово, таинственный символ, священный иероглиф какой-то глубоко знаменательной, неизмеримо обширной идеи – народность как будто заменила теперь собою и творчество, и вдохновение, и художественность, и классицизм, и романтизм, заключила в одном себе и эстетику и критику; сделалась теперь высшим критерием, пробным камнем достоинства всякого поэтического произведения и прочности всякой поэтической славы (5:654).<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Tolz, *Inventing the Nation*, p. 69.

<sup>123</sup> David Cooper, *Creating the Nation: Identity and Aesthetics in Early Nineteenth-Century Russia and Bohemia*. (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), p. 17.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 217-229.

<sup>125</sup> [A magical word, a secret symbol, a sacred hieroglyph of some deeply significant, immeasurably wide idea, *narodnost’* has replaced creativity, inspiration, artistry, classicism, and romanticism with itself,

If Belinsky rejected the word as a positive value for literature in “Retsenziia na *Deianiia Petra Velikogo*,” his review of literature from 1846 was far more ambiguous, defining literature in the full sense as “original, self-sufficient, national, Russian” (10:13). Addressing this ambiguity, Alexey Miller argues that Belinsky’s initial rejection of the word *narodnost*’ emerged out of a polemic against the Minister of Public Education, S. S. Uvarov, who claimed that the nation had already “come of age” and disassociated *narodnost*’ from its connotations of popular representation and sovereignty.<sup>126</sup> Belinsky is at pains to validate the imitations of Russia’s imitative, proto-literature as the initial phrase of its true literature, in which forced elements are organically assimilated into the principle of self-sufficiency.

Belinsky associates the static view of nation expressed by Uvarov with the peasantry, which, he writes, “supposes something unmovable” (5:123). Here, both reformist (Westernizing) and recuperative (Slavophilic) colorations of Russian nationalism are dependent on the construct of the peasant as well as that of the west. Comparisons with the west, however, only strengthen, indeed produce, key aspects of Russian nationalism, according to Liah Greenfield.<sup>127</sup> National identity derives, she claims, from imitation and cultural relativism, which ultimately begat various forms of resentment: first toward those who were not ashamed of western imitation and subsequently toward the western model itself, loosely defined but consistent enough to create an ideal in opposition. At the basis of these transformations is an inversion of reason into a value of undefinability, a symbol of a discourse in tension with itself. In a final move, the inverted values were connected to the peasantry.

Within the context of nationalist discourse, one form of literature, the expression of a unified culture associated with Westernizing education, is set in opposition with another. The first is rhetoric, justifiable for Belinsky “when literature had nothing from which to draw content and thus existed under the cover of external forces” (10:12). The second approaches “life and reality.” As Belinsky’s terms suggest, the national paradigm shares with the developing realist aesthetics a concept of literature as immediate experience. On the one hand, educated culture attempts to establish itself in the image of the peasant which it also renders stable (in both positive and negative ways). On the other hand, the peasantry supplied the notion of a latent tradition distinct from borrowed forms and visible in “the nation only in its present,” which is how Belinsky defines *narod* as opposed to *natsiia*.

Against this triple background of mimicking the west, defining oneself as Russian in opposition to the west, and appealing to a putative primordial Russian culture derived from its current instantiation among the peasantry, the many references to literary styles in *Zapiski* acquire further layers of meaning. Far beyond defying the classical model of genre, Turgenev also attacks the styles of movements that preceded it, from sentimental novels to romantic poetry. By generating a construct of immediacy to which all literary styles must answer, he also extends the values of originality, complexly associated with *narodnost*’ in the romantic period, to what is described by scholars of realism as the Quixote syndrome, “the overturning of preexisting narrative stereotypes, mostly of an idealist or romantic variety.”<sup>128</sup> In the context of the theories of nationalism outlined above, literariness as a value associated with rhetoric and

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gathering into itself alone aesthetics and criticism; it has been made into the highest criterion, the qualitative touchstone of every poetic work and soundness of every poetic glory.] Translation mine.

<sup>126</sup> Alexey Miller, “*Natsiia, Narod, Narodnost*’ in Russian in the Nineteenth-Century: Some Introductory Remarks in the History of Concepts,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, vol. 56 (2008), pp. 384-5.

<sup>127</sup> Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, p. 258.

<sup>128</sup> Jameson, “Afterward: A Note on Literary Realism,” in *A Concise Companion to Realism*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Wiley Blackwell, 2010), p. 279.

inadequate to the expression of Russian reality encounters another such value: literature as more immediate as well as national.

In section one, I explored the motif of hunting in *Zapiski* as the expression of this second type of literariness, which we can now understand within discourses of nationalism. Literature is emblemized by the hunter's connection to a community of readers to whom he gives voice and perspective. Its promise of immediacy is also established in connection to the social experience of peasants, who are imagined as uniquely particular: the very content of the nation. Yet it is in reference to peasants that literary cultures (the readers referenced throughout *Zapiski*) that such an image is mediated.

Let us look at "Smert'" (1848) to consider how peasant culture is created as a fiction and supports, in particular, a burgeoning realist aesthetics as a literature of immediacy. The story begins as the hunter, a fellow provincial landowner and his two companions, a German tutor and the estate's *desiatskii* (a peasant with policing authority), are required to wait in a clearing: "Немец поклонился, слез с лошади, достал из кармана книжку, кажется, роман Иоганны Шопенгауэр, и присел под кустик; Архип остался на солнце и в течение часа не шевельнулся" [The German bowed, slid from his horse, extracted a small book from his pocket – a novel, it appeared, by Johanna Schopenhauer – and seated himself in the shade of a bush, while Arkhip remained out in the sun for a solid hour without budging an inch] (4:212/130). The tutor's departure from his surroundings into his book (a popular sentimental novel) is associated with his non-Russianness.

Unlike the pauses described in section one from the stories "Ermolai" and "Kas'yan," this scene does not refer to the reader with second-person pronouns nor does it offer an empty perspective for readers to occupy. Rather, it situates the transmission of literary value behind the back of the German tutor, offering readers the illusion that we are not, like him, reading a book. Instead, we may feel closer to the constable Arkhip, who does not move for an entire hour and finds relief from waiting in another way, that is, by sinking into place. It is the hunter who redirects our own act of reading to the presence of Arkhip, positioning himself between the peasant and the tutor.

Jane Costlow has written that the forests described throughout Turgenev's writing "rustle with literary allusions," and they continue to do so, we might add, just as much as they offer a sense of contrast to the literariness associated with the tutor and his sentimental novel.<sup>129</sup> In this story, a forest, known to the narrator from his childhood, and ruined by recent fires and logging calls to his mind a poem by Nikolai Kol'tsov ("Les'" [The Forest], 1837) as an expression of this loss. It is possible to apply the ironic lens, established in the initial scene, to the hunter's own affectations, but one is just as readily invited to distinguish hunter from the tutor, elevating the latter's form of literariness as grounded in a national tradition.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, this tradition is connected to the story's current setting and is legitimized by the narrator's childhood memory of

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<sup>129</sup> Jane T. Costlow, *Heart-Pine Russia: Walking and Writing the Nineteenth-Century Forest* (Ithaca, NY/London: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 34.

<sup>130</sup> Dale Peterson argues that *Zapiski* "compile a deliberately problematic manual for reading the language of the Russian landscape ... and only applies simplistic juxtapositions so he can explore them." I would suggest that, against the background of nationalism, *Zapiski*'s "structural ironies" (Peterson's term) pronounce no final word against the hunter and the literary culture he stands for. Rather, as Peterson also points out, these ironies suggest the tensions within that culture's self-expression. "Recovering the Native Tongue: Turgenev, Chesnutt and Hurston," in *Up From Bondage: The Literatures of Russian and African American Soul* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 85. See also Peterson's "The Origin and End of Turgenev's *Sportman's Notebook*: The Poetics and Politics of a Precarious Balance," *Russian Literature*, Vol. XVI (1984), pp. 347-358.

it. The hunter does not enunciate his elegiac mood in the plot, but rather creates it through a description of the forest as he remembers it. In its position prior to the revelation that the forest is destroyed, the memory first appears as a description of the present and includes such seemingly immediate details as sudden sounds: “пестрые дятлы крепко стучали по толстой коре; звучный напев черного дрозда внезапно раздавался в густой листве вслед за переливчатым криком иволги” [colorful woodpeckers tapped away loudly at the thick bark; the resonant song of the blackbird suddenly rang out amid the thick foliage in the wake of the lilting call of the oriole] (4:213/130). Externalized in this way, the memory that calls forth the poem by Kol'tsov is naturalized in comparison to the tutor's reactions to the ravaged forest which are expressed in German and accented Russian: “Mein Gott! Mein Gott! — восклицал на каждом шагу фон-дер-Кок. — Што са шалость! што са шалость!” [*Mein Gott! Mein Gott!* von der Kock exclaimed at every step. ‘Such a sham! Such a sham!’] (4:214/132).

Less ‘real’ (that is, productive of description) than the narrator's memories, the tutor's lament appears as mere abstraction. The hunter registers loss because he knows of a past and a potential future, that is, a narrative of nation which is also a literary tradition. Arkhip ultimately dispels the elegiac mood corrupted by the tutor, but recovers the presence called forth in the hunter's memory: “Зато десятский Архип сохранял спокойствие невозмутимое и не горевал нисколько; напротив, он даже не без удовольствия через них (the oaks) перескакивал и кнутиком по ним постегивал” [But our guardian of the peace, Arkhip, maintained an imperturbable composure and showed not the least sign of regret; on the contrary, it was even with a certain pleasure that he jumped over them [the oaks] and lashed at them with his riding crop] (4:215/132). In this action, Arkhip introduces another aspect of immediacy, namely, indifference, a value which is elevated in the rest of the story and characterizes “how wondrously Russians die” (ibid). Arkhip offers no pity for the fallen trees just as, minutes later, a nearby peasant crushed under a falling tree asks no pity for himself. The ephemerality of existence is concretized as peasant culture, serving as a warrant for a national tradition as well as for that tradition's singular claim to the present.

The original scene of waiting cited above demonstrates literary society in the guise of the hunter projecting his values onto the character Arkhip, who marks a place outside rhetoric. It is the hunter who weaponizes this form of literariness and builds his own in its stead. As we have already seen in section one, however, such overt demonstration of the new literature leaves its features fully exposed. To free itself of models and approach reality as the peasant approaches death, “coldly and simply,” Turgenev's hunter returns to the countryside to discover and create its origin. As much as he seeks to cast off tradition (at least its borrowed aspects), then, he also seeks “something unmovable,” the phrase which Belinsky uses to describe the peasantry. This “something unmovable” is, in Turgenev's writing, a national paradigm inherent in the folds of peasant culture. Such a culture appears so abstract as to be defined by a manner of dying, though this point of focus is perfectly fitting for a literature building itself in the complex framework of an immediate present but that must legitimize a culturally unique tradition.

### III. *Description*

Scholars of description note that the detail, when it is valorized in literature and criticism, is often marshaled to dismantle idealist metaphysics, though perhaps not its romantic varieties, which required the particular as a microcosm of the whole. In any case, the target of realism's defense of description are notions of the ideal predicated on the absence of all particularity. Cynthia Wall traces a conceptual shift in views of description as ornamental to substantial



(excessive versus necessary), locating a celebration of the particular in the nineteenth century. This is part of large-scale shifts in which “the pleasure of vision [is appreciated] apart from the truth.”<sup>131</sup> Straddling the movements of romanticism and realism, this celebration of the particular brought attention to the way in which objects are perceived rather than the objects themselves. According to Wall, “particularized detail,” previously scorned by critics as superfluous, “begins to absorb the energy of the universal, to change its ontology from accidental to inherent.”<sup>132</sup>

Placing these shifts in the context of nationalism, we can see how the shift from a neo-classical genre system toward individual expression highlights the importance of the act of perception. Ginzburg specifically credits Turgenev with developing descriptions “seen by someone.”<sup>133</sup> Nature descriptions effectively bridged to prose from Turgenev’s poetry of the 1830s and ‘40s, which developed beyond imitation when, in Ginzburg’s words, he “wrote from his own observations.”<sup>134</sup> Markedly different from the selective detailing of the psychological sketch, the descriptive style developed in Turgenev’s poetry nevertheless found traction in contemporary trends. As outward-focused as his poetry, Turgenev’s prose was in-step with prevailing experiments in objective styles of narration. Studies of description such as Wall’s suggest that the emphasis on perception ultimately effect a shift away from romanticism, in which “there existed universal correspondences among individual imaginations and between imagination and the sensible world.”<sup>135</sup> In *Zapsiki okhotnika*, this sense of a lost universal may be located in the hunter’s frequent address to readers. On the one hand, the narrator seems to expect readers to be able to participate in his imagination. On the other, he cannot unite readers, his own perceptions, and the sensible world of a countryside populated with serfs. A belief in “universal correspondences” begins to unravel.

I argue in this section that Turgenev makes clear a growing distance from a style of description which celebrates vision for its connective potential. Carol Christ’s assessment of description in English prose of the Victorian period offers a fitting model for exposition: particulars “are not representative of a moment of imaginative experience that becomes in some way universal ... but merely descriptive of a single moment of consciousness which is portrayed for its own interest and which rarely leads to a statement of universal judgment.”<sup>136</sup> I isolate what Wall calls the new “ontological status of the detail” as a thing possessed of inherent meaning and the emergence of this single moment of consciousness referenced by Christ. First, details index a sense of universal meaning in the here-and-now. Secondly, they emblemize a world fractured into different, even contradictory social perspectives. *Zapsiki okhotnika* develops a style of description between these two moments and, in the process, reveals the transition.

In section one, I noted that a common feature of *Zapiski* is the second-person ‘you’ and suggested that this perspective functions in part to invite readers to connect with the narrator’s descriptions and in part to avoid collapsing ‘substantial’ reality into the interest of the perceiver. At stake in the transition from romanticism to realism is the heightened sense of the individual’s determined nature (evidenced in typology) coupled with an interest in psychological experience,

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<sup>131</sup> Wall, *The Prose of Things*, p. 30.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>133</sup> Ginzburg, *Literatura v poiskakh real'nosti*, p. 22. Joseph Conrad also concludes of Turgenev’s writing that he “transforms the state of description from the prose of the 1830s, largely confined to idyllic clichés of the natural world in sentimental tales.” “Turgenev’s Landscapes: An Overview,” *Russian Language Journal*, vol. 41, no. 140 (1987), p. 119.

<sup>134</sup> Ginzburg, *Literatura v poiskakh real'nosti*, p. 26.

<sup>135</sup> Wall, *The Prose of Things*, 38.

<sup>136</sup> Carol T. Christ, *Finer Optic: The Aesthetic of Particularity in Victorian Poetry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975) pp. 7-9. Quoted in Wall, *The Prose of Things*, p. 38.

or interiority.<sup>137</sup> The need to balance these conceptions brings us to the question of types versus characters, the latter defined by their relative individualization. Characters as opposed to types are aware of the roles into which they are born, at times struggling to define themselves beyond them. In the 1840s, typology was associated the Natural School as a way to categorize social life in a pseudo-scientific manner and explore the influences of environment on behavior. In the work of Nikolai Gogol, typology renders characters marionettes in part through the effects of language. Combining these approaches in *Zapiski*, Turgenev began to perceive their limits. In an oft-quoted letter to Pavel Annenkov, he writes:

Довольно я старался извлекать из людских характеров разводные эссенции чтобы влить их потом в маленькие скляночки — нюхайте, мол, почтенные читатели, откупорьте и нюхайте, не правда ли, пахнет русским типом? Довольно, довольно! Но вот вопрос: способен ли я к чему-нибудь большому, спокойному? Дадутся ли мне простые, ясные линии... (Pis'ma, 2:77).<sup>138</sup>

Turgenev's description of type in terms of *essence* (the French word connoting concentrated significance) plays on the meaning of the device in its philosophical and literary sense as a distilled expression of the whole through the part. It also points to assumptions about shared social or cultural references, underscoring, with scent, how memories are called forth from readers who share in the writer's experience. What Turgenev draws from the type in this definition is immediacy: a sensory experience of a smell and a circuit of exchange between writers and readers.

In a review of stories by Vladimir Dal', which are in many ways representative of typology as it was practiced in the Natural School, Turgenev builds on the sense that types establish familiarity among readers:

Далю не всегда удаются его большие повести; связать и распутать узел, представить игру страстей, развить последовательно целый характер <...> но где автор пишет с натуры, ставит перед вами или брюхача-купца, или русского мужичка на завалинке <...> вы не можете не прийти в упоение... (1:260).<sup>139</sup>

The shift from type to character, suggested by Turgenev's comments, is traced by Catherine Gallagher as the shift in the nineteenth century within the status of fiction to a form of truth-telling.<sup>140</sup> Types play on knowledge of society and affirm what we already seem to know. Characters, by contrast, are accepted by readers as 'truthful' despite the lack of a particular referent in the real world. Nevertheless, realism remains "locked in the confines of the credible."<sup>141</sup> Realism continues to depend on the sense that the whole (e.g., humanity in general)

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<sup>137</sup> Ginzburg, *Literatura v poiskakh real'nosti*, p. 8.

<sup>138</sup> [I've tried long enough to extract diluted essences from types of people in order to then pour them out into little vials: inhale, dear readers, uncork and inhale! Does it not smell of the Russian type? Enough, enough! But the question remains: am I capable of something large and settled? Will clear, simple lines come to me?] Translation mine.

<sup>139</sup> [Dal' is not always successful in larger stories; the tying and untying of knots, the presentation of a game of passions, the sequential development of an entire character <...> but when the author writes from nature and presents before your eyes a round-bellied merchant, or a Russian peasant sitting on a ledge <...> you can't help but fall into raptures...] Translation mine.

<sup>140</sup> Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," p. 337.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

is expressed through the part (e.g., imagined characters) but the lost viability of types also tokens the loss of imagination's universality: one person's vision can no longer be communicated to another without constructing a fictional world to mediate it.

Turgenev's creation of peasant types such as Khor' and Kalinych, among others, are part of his general project to map the features of a social landscape. Types concretize social and historical reality, but they also carry that reality's trace as an abstract paradigm which conflicts with immediacy. In *Zapiski okhotnika*, typologies appear to accord with the imperative of immediacy only if there is no resistance to them. Otherwise, history and society bear down on the individual moment, at times suppressing it entirely. Along with the celebration of the particular, we shall see, types in some sense are meant to overcome abstraction, or at least unify (in a romantic sense) within the particular. In the cultural imaginary, peasants, especially, afford this double celebration of social stability (through connectivity and familiarity) and perception. However, just as descriptions grow colored by the interests of the perceiver, peasant types frequently defy categorization. This is not, I suggest, a reflection of inherent class differences. Rather, the dislocations evinced through social ambition begin with peasants in the devastating realization that no one can be immediate in the way that literature, as expressed in *Zapiski okhotnika*, demanded.

In the first part of this section, I show how Turgenev's approach to description models the celebration of the particular which, in rootedness to place and origin, peasant characters help establish. In the second part of this section, I trace the emergence of character from type as the experience of dislocation and division. One device in the creation of immediacy is the narrator's perspective which avoids locating itself in a specific character in order to present details as simultaneously particular and universal, concrete yet attached to an individual's traits or the events in their life. In the course of Turgenev's stories, peasant characters and the hunter-narrator disclose, always reluctantly and in a mood of disappointment, the perceiver behind the perception. In section four, I continue the discussion of character as Turgenev constitutes it, that is, torn between origin and the desire to erase it. Section three traces the source of its emergence as a feature of description and the transition from perception to perceivers.

In a second review of Aksakov's *Zapiski ruzheinogo okhotnika* (1854), Turgenev makes explicit his aversion to referencing inner life in nature descriptions. He derides the "so-called nature descriptions" of romanticists such as Victor Hugo who, he claims, "fall into comparisons with inner life" (5:415). Such comparisons distort nature as Turgenev understands it, that is, as a whole indifferent to its parts. In a well-known passage, he elaborates his view of nature as a vast network of particulars preoccupied with pursuing their own ends. Nature's indifference is portrayed as a strange inversion of desire; nature does not care about anything because it is full of things that care only about themselves. Nevertheless, Turgenev's own writing suggests that it is possible to overcome "comparisons with inner life" by investing indifference with universal meaning. Nature is thus a negative concept and, like Arkhip's indifference in "Smert'," it serves to reject preexisting forms. Arkhip's whipping of the fallen trees, eulogized by the tutor, appears in this context as critiquing romanticizations of nature such as Hugo's.

The transformation of the detail into a vehicle of such negative expression is exemplified in a passage from Akaskov that Turgenev quotes to illustrate his ideal:

Иногда река на большое пространство протекает дремучими ненаселенными лесами и получает особенный, уединенный, дикий и вместе важный и торжественный образ. Берега ее не измяты ничьим прикосновеньем: изредка забредет на них охотник, но не оставит следов своих надолго: сильная

растительность, происходящая от избытка влаги, сейчас поднимет смятые травы и цветы (5:398).<sup>142</sup>

As the river in this passage attains its particular, solitary, wild yet imperious visage, the ontology of the detail is born. This single image resists appropriations, the latter symbolized by evanescent traces left by hunters. In *Zapiski okhotnika* as in Aksakov's description, it is a hunter (in this case, an emblem of vision) who also regrows these traces with description, offering a form of literature which supersedes its own distortions. Any sense of vital multiplicity (the "powerful vegetation," growing rapidly and in abundance from "an excess of moisture") serves this singulative, imperious image: a still-frame of ephemerality itself. In the words of Phillippe Hamon, description in this instance has changed significantly from its earlier status when "to do literature is to avoid the descriptive."<sup>143</sup> Now, it would seem, description has a unique claim to literariness.

In section one, I suggested that through detachment, peasant wanderers like Kas'yan embody the celebration of the particular because they locate meaning in whatever place they find themselves rather than in the stories or emotions they may bring to it. In this way, the here-and-now becomes its own origin and the ground of its own significance. Peasants answer the double imperative of immediacy and typology by showing no resistance to the roles into which they were born and expressing particularity within those roles. In effecting this celebration, peasant characters allow Turgenev to combine a stabilizing past with a constantly regenerating present.

Yet a problem soon emerges that is exemplified by the vagabond Styopa from "Malinovaia voda" (1848). Like Kas'yan and the hunter, he is detached, but unlike them, he does not submit to place; he has no anchoring at all.

Всякий человек имеет хоть какое бы то ни было положение в обществе, хоть какие-нибудь да связи; всякому дворовому выдается если не жалованье, то по крайней мере так называемое «отвесное»: Степушка не получал решительно никаких пособий, не состоял в родстве ни с кем, никто не знал о его существовании. У этого человека даже прошедшего не было; о нем не говорили; он и по ревизии едва ли числился. (4:35)<sup>144</sup>

Styopa's lack of a livelihood and relations recalls the earthly attachments which Kas'yan rejects on principle but ultimately concedes. Styopa's past challenges the demands of typology precisely because it is mysterious and conflicted, and the source of that conflict is itself revealing: he is the unacknowledged offspring of a landowner, apparently disdainful of peasants (he does not partake in their holidays) and their subservience (he does not bow to the master). Such socially mixed background would serve as the basis for characterization in Turgenev's future writing. Emerging

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<sup>142</sup> [At times the river flows into a large space of dense and uninhabited forests, and there it attains a special image—secluded, and wild, though at the same time solemn and stately. Its shores are not disfigured by anyone's touch: from time to time a hunter would shuffle through them, but his tracks do not remain for long: thick vegetation, sprouting from an abundance of moisture, would instantly raise up the crumpled grasses and flowers.] Translation mine.

<sup>143</sup> Phillippe Hamon, "Rhetorical Status of the Descriptive," *Yale French Studies*, vol. 61 (1981), p. 6.

<sup>144</sup> [Every person has at least some kind of position in society, some kind of connections. Even the last house serf is issued some kind of remuneration, at least what is called "by the weight": Styopushka received absolutely no kind of aid or kin and no one knew of his existence. This person hardly had a past. No one spoke of him; he hardly counted in the census.] Translation mine.

from a split that makes him unplaceable, Styopa forms the extreme point from which character as a site of internal discord develops.

The tangled, heavy speech of Styopa is the perfect contrast to the descriptive sensibility of the cycle's narrator. Description requires ownership of language and, in contrast to Styopa, acceptance of one's social place. Styopa offers no clarity as to his place, whereas the narrator draws readers into it:

Мы сидели в тени; но и в тени было душно. Тяжелый, знойный воздух словно замер; горячее лицо с тоской искало ветра, да ветра-то не было. <...> Кузнечики трещали в порыжелой траве; перепела кричали как бы нехотя; ястреба плавно носились над полями и часто останавливались на месте, быстро махая крылами и распустив хвост веером. Мы сидели неподвижно, подавленные жаром (4:40).<sup>145</sup>

The details of this passage are particular (there are no allusions to inner life) and yet the second-person pronoun typically used in the cycle is replaced by the third (we). The hunter, Styopa, and a third character, Tuman, are inscribed into this focalizing perspective. Despite the passage's string of details, it circles back to its initial action, "we were sitting." The detail of the hawk is hardly left to its own existence even as it hangs still in the air. The feelings and thoughts of the characters remain unspoken, but something about the passage begs to be interpreted in relation to them. To illuminate the scene of waiting, the hawk would require interpretation. Instead, it offers no relief: three characters, sitting in silence, are unable to rid themselves of the uncertainties that emerge between them. Not only is Styopa incomprehensible; Tuman falls silent after the hunter questions him about serf experience.

Such tensions reveal the cross-purposes of the celebration of the particular; the detail is freighted with significance because it stands alone, but here, it bears the weight of something beyond its reach. According to some scholars, nineteenth century description begs interpretation as much as it blocks it. Roland Barthes, for example, reads a singular message into even the most silent details, 'we are the real,' and concludes his well-known essay with a claim that suggests how the particular is cast as the new universal.

The pure and simple "representation" of the "real," the naked relation of "what is" (or has been) thus appears as a resistance to meaning; this resistance confirms the great mythic opposition of the true-to-life (the lifelike) and the intelligible; it suffices to recall that, in the ideology of our time, obsessive reference to the concrete <...> is always brandished like a weapon against meaning, as if, by some statutory exclusion, what is alive cannot signify—and vice versa.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> [We sat in the shade, but even in the shade the air was oppressive. A heavy, torrid air seemed to settle in place. The burning face search with yearning for wind, but there was no kind of wind at all. <...> The grasshoppers chirped in the red-brown grass; a quail twittered as if unwillingly; a hawk floated evenly over the fields and, frequently holding itself in one place, quickly flapped its wings and unfurled its tail like a fan. We sat in stillness, oppressed by the heat.] Translation mine.

<sup>146</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect" in *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000*, ed. Dorothy Hale (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 233. Barthes' account of description is perhaps the best example of what Gérard Genette describes as his simultaneous fascination and repulsion with the sign. "The bad sign is bloated because it is redundant, and it is redundant because it wants to be true, both sign and thing." *Figures of Literary Discourse*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 35. From this perspective, the descriptive points to the peculiar form of the peasant as I describe it throughout this dissertation, a sign which writers both succumbed to and noticed

The clarity of Turgenev's descriptive language, contrasted to the elliptical and incoherent realm of inner life, should caution us against lending too much weight to the anti-verbalism derided by Barthes and popular in Turgenev's own time.<sup>147</sup> By contrast, language enables the universal to be accessed through the elaboration of particular details. Thus, the trouble created by the presence of characters such as Styopa as indefinable types suggests the extent to which common language, predicated on social stability, is at the heart of description's effects. "The concrete" is elevated as universal to the extent that, on Barthes' account, it resists language, yet Turgenev relies on language to create immediacy and does not problematize it. Here I depart from commentaries which interpret *Zapiski's* critique of rhetoric as a critique of language. By contrast, throughout the stories, only when types are established through a shared language can the concrete world emerge.<sup>148</sup>

It is worth noting that although Turgenev's descriptive style contributes to the creation of immediacy by establishing a temporality of presence, it is distinct from what Jameson terms affect (one approach to the larger field on the subject).<sup>149</sup> On his account, affect "wages battle against the microstructures of language and the particular dominance of point of view, which holds affective impulses in check in a central consciousness."<sup>150</sup> This marks a contrast to descriptions which attribute perceptions to perceivers, channeling everything into their story, whether by relating to the plot or, returning to Hugo, encoding something about their inner life. In Turgenev's descriptions, the celebration of language is part of the celebration of the particular, which contravenes affect. Still, while language's embrace is crucial for Turgenev's descriptions, that of a "centralized consciousness" is not. Jameson's point is that non-focalized descriptive passages avoid attributing the affect they create to a single character. What is illuminating from this account is the connection between description and the absence of perspectival attribution. For Turgenev, description as the celebration of the particular is (at least potentially) "something universal." Yet precisely that feature of description which is meant to offer substantiality and stability seems to erase it.

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its redundancy. Here again is Barthes: "Nothing is more marked than simplicity. It is the very figure, indeed the perfectly obligatory figure, of the sublime" (quoted in Genette, *Figure*, p. 48).

<sup>147</sup> Suffice it to recall the ideal of undefinability linked to peasants in nationalist discourse in section two.

<sup>148</sup> Though resistant to interpretation, Turgenev's details seem to declare less that they are the real than that they are atmospheric, unbound to single consciousness conjured easily by the imagination. Along similar lines, Douglas Clayton argues in a reading of *Rudin*, Turgenev's first novel in 1856, that rather than serving a metonymic, 'realist' function, details are organized into sets of images that play an important, metaphoric role in the novel. "Night and Wind: Images and Allusion as the Source of the Poetic in Turgenev's 'Rudin,'" *Canadian Slavonic Paper*, vol. 26, no. 1 (1984), p. 11. Rimvydas Silbajoris also stresses the internal, symbolic function of Turgenev's descriptions rather than a narrative logic, although the de-symbolized logic of *Zapiski okhotnika* is hardly recovered even in such uses. "Images and Structures in Turgenev's Sportsman's Notebook," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 28, no. 2 (1984), pp. 180-191.

<sup>149</sup> Newlin's reading of Turgenev's use of perspective in *Zapiski* as "affective awareness," neither subjectively unaware nor objectively analytical, points to another connection between theories of affect and Turgenev's writing, although Newlin also emphasizes the importance of "realist views of nature as such" with which I would associate a firmer connection between language and significance than studies of affect usually ascribe to it. Newlin, "At the Bottom of the River," p. 76. Newlin cites this phrase from Richard Gustafson's usage in a different context, *Leo Tolstoy, Resident and Stranger* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 226.

<sup>150</sup> Jameson, *Antinomies of Realism* (London: Verso, 2013), p. 11.

Let us take a closer look at how the celebration of the particular depends on a de-centered consciousness for the filtration of details, one that avoids “portraying its own interest.” In the descriptions thus far analyzed in this chapter, the play of shade and light as a common motif reveals the connection between linguistic clarity and the experience of immediacy, from the lengthy passage from “Kas’yan,” detailing rectilinear shadows falling from piles of firewood, to the lament which closes the description of the dying forest in “Smert’”: “who could have imagined that in Chaplygin shadows would be nowhere to be seen!” (4:213). Shadows indicate the presence of objects to observe, supplying shapes and colors for the eye to trace, and the hunter who externalizes himself depends on these objects.

Though shadows frequently induce sleep, affording the absence of consciousness, they remain closely linked with observational clarity. This combination is exemplified in a passage from a poem, “Na okhote – letom” [“On the hunt, Summertime”], published in the 1847 cycle, “Derevnia”: “Все раскинулись члены; стихают горячие волны / Крови; машет на нас темными маками сон. / Из-под тяжелых ресниц взор наблюдает недолго / Мелких букашек и мух, их суетливую жизнь [Every limb loosens; waves of warm blood begin to settle / Sleep beckons like dark poppies / From under heavy eyelids the gaze notices for a moment / The smallest little insects and flies, their bustling lives] (1:68).<sup>151</sup> The speaker, overwhelmed by sleep, provides a window into the environment; a world emerges when the speaker’s own internal world dissolves into unconsciousness. The immediacy created in such passages thus depends on mutual submission: the writer to nature, which takes his hand and paints itself, and nature to stillness. In “Smert’,” a shadowless world contracts its focus into those who cast their own shadow and thus confront themselves, recapitulating what “Malinovaia voda” also suggests: the unspoken thoughts of the perceiver which lie behind perception.

Turgenev’s stories cultivate values which invite difference through their openness to details the experience of immediacy is meant to avoid perspectival attribution and, still worse, forays into interiority. The celebration of the particular is held in check by the demand that it be knowable. These invite considerations apart from the scene-at-hand and threaten to disrupt it. Williams distinguishes between what is knowable and what is known in the countryside: the knowable is “what is desired and what needs to be known” whereas the known is elite culture itself, an “interest and sensibility” quite distinct from peasants’.<sup>152</sup> Such is the dissonance between the image of the peasant on which literary culture projects its needs and that culture’s own realities.

As the situation of Styopa suggests, the problem with peasants is that they, too, are inherently displaced and socially ambitious. In *Zapiski* and throughout Turgenev’s writing, a common type (paradoxically enough) exemplifying this tradition is the spoiled valet. The paradox lies in the fact that a spoiled serf is the basis for character as one who exceeds or struggles against their social status: a contrast to type as a form of stability and an index of familiarity. An externalized, substantial social form, refreshing in its concreteness, must also be familiar. In “Svidanie” (1850), the disturbances of this type effect the narrator’s own ability to maintain himself at a distance from the scenes he witnesses.

The story begins in the usual manner with entrancing and atmospheric descriptive passages, heightening attention only to induce a soporific calm that ends in sleep, “that placid, gentle sleep known only to hunters.” The dream is no conduit to inner life, however. To negotiate the balance, the hunter awakens to describe the forest that surrounds him with the enhanced clarity of his drowsy vision. He finds it occupied by one who also does not disturb it.

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<sup>151</sup> Translations included in-text are mine unless otherwise marked.

<sup>152</sup> Williams, *The Country and The City*, p. 173.

Sitting at some distance away from the hunter's resting spot, the peasant Akulina is painted into the scene by his gaze which is as measured as before, if more plainly desirous. Akulina is herself of a descriptive sensibility. Upon the arrival of the man for whom she waits (the hunter waiting with her in this double-fantasy of anticipation), she shares with him the flowers she has gathered and the descriptive sensibility they emblemize:

Цветы, — уныло отвечала Акулина. — Это я полевой рябинки нарвала, — продолжала она, несколько оживившись, — это для телят хорошо. А это вот череда — против золотухи. Вот поглядите-ка, какой чудный цветик; такого чудного цветика я еще отродясь не видала. Вот незабудки, а вот маткина-душка... (4:265).<sup>153</sup>

The awaited figure is oblivious to this sensibility: he is a spoiled valet dressed in the latest fashions and on his way to Petersburg with his master. The hunter sees what the valet cannot, a contrast that could not be any clearer when the valet pulls from his pocket a lorgnette which Akulina attempts to use, sees nothing, and declares, "This is not meant for us!" As much as she appreciates the particular, Akulina makes no attempt to be what she is not. The restraint required of the hunter fails him as he leaps toward the abandoned Akulina—this perfect embodiment of particularity and stability. Yet in this gesture, the hunter's own descriptive sensibility becomes an experience "portrayed for its own interests." When the hunter collects Akulina's discarded flowers, they become a symbol of himself: precisely what he wanted to avoid.

Tracing shifts in Turgenev's descriptive style throughout his work, Konstantin Pigarev notes that after *Zapiski*, the use of details becomes more selective, "serving as psychological accompaniment to the experience of his characters and making inner connections to the plot."<sup>154</sup> No longer transparent to readers, a shared world is built by characters with limited perspectives. For this reason, description itself as a mode of expression is no longer indifferent but entails historical and psychological perspective. For example, the titular character from "Gamlet Shchigrovskogo uezda" ["Hamlet from the Shchigri district"] (1849) intercedes: "look how well I describe" in the middle of his description. The loss of non-ironic description also pervades the rest of Turgenev's work. In *Ottsy i deti*, one of the few extended descriptive passages is tinged with irony: Nikolai Petrovich, admonished for his love of nature, asks himself, "how could you have no feeling for nature?" The question motivates a description of the forest around him: "и он посмотрел кругом, как бы желая понять, как можно не сочувствовать природе" (8:249-250).<sup>155</sup> More than a conflicted treatment of romantic themes, these examples point to the fleeting moment between "the celebration of the particular" and characterization.

To conclude this section, I show the shift in descriptive perspectives completed in two works written after the 1852 collection, "Zhivye moshchi" (1874) and *Asya* (1858). I interpret certain changes (the thematization of description in a religious key, description's contrast to 'inner turmoil' and social displacement) as comments on the values established in *Zapiski*. These stories evince the effect of the lost particular on the first-person narrator. Building on my

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<sup>153</sup> ['Flowers,' answered Akulina despondently. 'They're some field tansies I've picked,' she continued, brightening slightly, 'and they're good for calves. And these are marigolds, they help against scrofula. Just look what a lovely little flower it is! I've never seen such a lovely little flower before in all my born days. Then there are some forget-me-nots, here are some violets...'] Freeborn, 174.

<sup>154</sup> Konstantin Pigarev, "Peizazh Turgeneva i peizazh v zhivopisi ego vremeni," in *Russkaia literatura i izaobrazitel'noe iskusstvo* (Moscow: Nauka, 1972), p. 88.

<sup>155</sup> [He looked around, as if wishing to understand how it was possible to have no feeling for nature.] Translation by Michael R. Katz, *Fathers and Sons* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), p. 43.



interpretation of “Svidanie,” I suggest that first-person narration (required for the effect of immediacy) suffers characterization as a result of displacement. Defined in terms of social ambition, displacement is the negative contrast to peasants, but it is also most disastrously enacted by them. In discourses of the period, they constitute a kind of ground to which all social identities can return, but in *Zapiski*, they also form the basis from which identities change and morph.

By 1874, it had become difficult to render first-person narration without characterizing the narrator. The main character “Zhivye moshchi,” a peasant suffering a paralyzing illness, recognizes the narrator and repeatedly calls out his name. Lukheria once belonged to the narrator’s estate; he remembers her. However faintly, this story is thus a feature of the narrator’s character as much as it is a passing scene in the present. Details of the hunter’s biography are scant if not entirely absent in the cycle of 1852. As if to mitigate the effects of her entanglement in the past, however, Lukheria spends her days honing her descriptive sensibilities, returning to the experience of immediacy against a background of historical perspective: “Крот под землю роется — я и то слышу. И запах я всякий чувствовать могу, самый какой ни на есть слабый! Гречиха в поле зацветет или липа в саду — мне и сказывать не надо: я первая сейчас слышу” [If there is a mole digging underground, I can hear it. And I can smell every scent, it doesn’t matter how faint it is! If the buckwheat is just beginning to flower in the field or a lime tree is just blossoming in the garden, I don’t have to be told: I’m the first to smell the scent] (4:357/216). Lukheria’s level of observation also requires that she quiet her mind: “Нет... а так лежу я себе, лежу-полеживаю — и не думаю; чую, что жива, дышу — и вся я тут. Смотрю, слушаю” (ibid). Such a state also purifies her from sins, she claims, even those of thought.

The hunter is overcome by Lukheria’s stillness, but like the scene from “Malinovaia voda,” this stillness is tense with unspoken thoughts: “Жестокая, каменная неподвижность лежавшего передо мною живого, несчастного существа сообщилась и мне: я тоже словно оцепенел” [The cruel, stony immobility of the unfortunate living being who lay before me affected me also, and I became literally rigid] (4:358-359/218). Eventually, the silence fills with memories and desires. Lukheria remembers her past and the hunter sees its trace. (He had “secretly sigher over her” in his youth.) In the end, Lukheria’s heightened descriptive sensibility is ambiguously valued: “Рассказывали, что в самый день кончины она всё слышала колокольный звон, хотя от Алексеевки до церкви считают пять верст с лишком и день был будничной. Впрочем, Лукерья говорила, что звон шел не от церкви, а «сверху». Вероятно, она не посмела сказать: с неба” [There were rumors that on the day of her death she heard a bell ringing all the time, although from Alekseyevka to the church is a matter of three miles or more and it was not a Sunday. Lukheria, however, said that the ringing did not come from the church but ‘from above.’ Probably she did not dare to say that it came from heaven] (4:365/226). Thematized in a religious key, Lukheria’s descriptions echo the celebration of the particular as an imaginative experience that becomes somehow universal. Yet such a sensibility now seems impossible to maintain on earth—where it is was once possible to believe that the concrete has value in itself. The promise of the particular is thus increasingly untenable in the very frame where it was established: the here-and-now.

In the absence of an earthly version of descriptive sensibility, a vision of conflicted particularity develops further in *Asya*, where, in the gap left by description, inner life comes flooding back. The titular character of the 1858 novella builds on the problems with social ambition explored in “Svidanie” in connection to the spoiled valet. Raised in the village by her peasant mother and later adopted into her father’s gentry household, Asya is profoundly divided. In a sense, she combines the characters from “Svidanie”: part of her is ambitious, and part of her

is not. This combination is the basis for inner turmoil: “Она хотела <...> заставить *целый мир* забыть ее происхождение, она и стыдилась своей матери, и стыдилась своего стыда, и гордилась ею” (italics in the original) [She knew that the master was her father, but she also quickly understood her false position; arrogance developed in her strongly, and mistrust, too; wicked habits were rooted in, simplicity disappeared. She wanted to force *the whole world* to forget her origin; she was ashamed of her mother and of her shame, and took pride in it, too] (7:94).

Recognizing her status as the master’s daughter as well as her “false position” in his house as a peasant raised by peasants, Asya becomes marked by references to interiority which are negatively valued as agitation and turmoil. Her “arrogance and unease,” the result of her divided nature, also establishes the basis for the narrator’s insight into her unspoken thoughts: “Вы находите мое поведение неприличным, казалось, говорило ее лицо, все равно, я знаю, вы мной любуетесь” [‘You find my behavior inappropriate?’ the expression on her face seemed to say, ‘all the same I know you’re curious about me] (7:82). Though demarcated by speaking verbs and clearly a supposition, this insight into a character’s mind forms the basis for more sophisticated displays of character consciousness. In *Zapiski okhotnika*, Chertopkhanov offers a similar example in the single instance of free indirect discourse in the cycle: “...that he, Chertopkhanov, had been taken in the vulgarest way, no!”<sup>156</sup> As in the case of Asya, at the heart of inner life is a wounded ego.

Although Asya’s characteristic unease eventually dissolves into simplicity, she remains divided in a way that provokes the narrator’s own division. Asya arranges to be alone with him in a boudoir, a move as bold and naïve as the stereotypes of her conflicting identities. Unable to reside in this union, however, the narrator delivers a speech that is directed not toward Asya but toward readers as distant judges of his behavior: “Останьтесь, — воскликнул я, — останьтесь, прошу вас. Вы имеете дело с честным человеком да, с честным человеком” [‘Stop!’ I cried out, ‘Stop, I beg you. You are dealing with a man of honor, yes, a man of honor’] (7:113). Here, he is expelled from the experience of immediacy that Asya initially recovers.

Prior to his own unraveling, the narrator is set at ease when he learns what is behind Asya’s mysterious, maddeningly unplaceable behavior. Only with background knowledge is Asya’s inner life resealed, establishing the familiar and fulfilling social expectations. Dissolving into type from character, she becomes transparent once more, though in a very different way:

...теперь я многое понимал в ней, что прежде сбивало меня с толку; ее внутренне беспокойство, неуменье держать себя, желание порисоваться, все мне стало ясно. Я заглянул в эту душу: тайный гнет давил ее постоянно, тревожно путалось и билось неопытное самолюбие, но все существо ее стремилось к правде (7:98).<sup>157</sup>

After this revelation, Asya emerges from the depths of social incoherence into the placid realm of description, offering scenes of stillness to contrast the volatile movements that defined her at the novella’s beginning.

Instead of cultivating a sense of the familiar, then, description has become an index of isolation. Readers, for their part, are no longer a source of fellow feeling or universal connection.

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<sup>156</sup> Somoff, *Imperative of Reliability: Russian Prose of the Eve of the Novel, 1820-1850s* (DeKalb, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015), p. 130.

<sup>157</sup> [...now I understood much of what had bewildered me about her before: her inner agitation, inability to conduct herself, desire to show off: everything became clear. I peered into this soul: a secret burden oppressed her without relief; youth arrogance torments and confuses her, but the whole creature strove toward the truth.]

Instead, they are a source of judgment in constituting “the whole world” to whom Asya proves herself and the aghast public amongst whom the narrator must secure his honor. A stalemate between the claims of immediacy and the demand for knowability that initially develops in *Zapiski* and is here sharpened. Turning to the next section, it is this stalemate that also shifts judgment away from readers to a place where it can be controlled: a new narrative perspective.

#### IV. Narration

Commentators of *Zapiski* often note its scant plot and lack of complex characters, absences which lead them to seek the cycle’s unifying thread in modes of narration that are engaged, tested, and explored to their limits. One such commentator summarizes the cycle as follows, indicating the apparent simplicity of the stories as well as the complex narrative questions they raise: “the plots in *Zapiski okhotnika* typically amount to the narrator appearing in a place as a hunter, observing people, everyday life, and nature; describing his meetings, transmitting dialogues, and after some time, departing.”<sup>158</sup> Appearing in a place, observing nature and society, experiencing encounters and transmitting them: all this requires moving between the status of character and narrator as well as negotiating different modalities within each sphere, that is, perspective (character) and narration (narrator).

Elizabeth Cheresch Allen outlines several narrative modes whose combinations are deployed in what many scholars see as the cycle’s search for a model of consciousness, resulting in modulating varieties of authorial distance.<sup>159</sup> The apperceptive mode focalizes details through “character-bound” narrators (Mieke Bal’s term) and the autonomous mode breaks the bonds of character to speak directly to readers, provide background information, or digress from the plot.<sup>160</sup> In “Ermolai i mel’ nichika,” for example, the apperceptive mode facilitates the effect of immediacy by presenting details in the here-and-now before switching back to the autonomous mode to provide background information on Ermolai, that is, to typify him. Both modes accord with the double imperative of realism in Turgenev’s experiment: immediacy on the one hand and typology on the other.

In this section, I argue that through these extremes of apperception and autonomy, the place of the peasant as the unity of immediacy and typology splits in two. I follow narratologists who argue that third-person omniscience corresponds to character interiority (unspoken thoughts and feelings). Further, I interrogate the assumption that mastering interiority is a goal for early realists. As I suggest in section three, a battle is subtly waged *against* inner life as a site of division and an index of displacement. Indeed, the cycle seeks to erase inner life entirely by rendering it identical to place. When the battle is lost, interiority is relocated because it is no longer a conduit to something beyond the individual except social order and historical time. Throughout this chapter I have described the effects of immediacy which, we can now see, include the apperceptive narrative mode, the effect previously described as the immersed but unoccupied perspective projected onto readers. In this section, I focus on the autonomous mode, arguing through readings of “Ermolai i mel’ nichikha” and “Khor’ i Kalinych” that in Turgenev’s writing, narration’s development into omniscience stems from the development of character as a socially displaced type. In this division, omniscience assumes the values that are sought in the place of the peasant: familiarity without judgment, immediacy without incoherence.

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<sup>158</sup> V. V. Golubkov, *Khudozhestvennoe masterstvo I. S. Turgenev* (Moscow: Nauka, 1960), p. 30.

<sup>159</sup> Allen, *Beyond Realism*, pp. 138-9. See also Costlow, *Heart-Pine Russia*, p. 30.

<sup>160</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 80.

In both its apperceptive and autonomous narrative modes, the cycle's narration has not yet become reliable in the manner of Victoria Somoff's account of perspective in realist narrative strategies. As Somoff points out, the narrator in *Zapiski* relies on external observation and is unable to describe what characters are thinking unless those characters speak. He must also verify his knowledge by citing rumors or past experiences. Turgenev's discovery of a perspective that transcends these limits is located by Somoff in a particular place, that of the peasant, that warrants further analysis. According to Somoff, a peasant character in "Mumu" (1852) (not part of *Zapiski*) establishes the grounds for omniscience in ways which (I argue) suggest the relevance of his social experience as Turgenev imagined it.<sup>161</sup> Before returning to the cycle, let me pause to build on Somoff's account as a way to correlate the concerns of omniscience to what I have described as the value of place in Turgenev's cycle. This discussion will also establish the parameters for my subsequent analysis of the autonomous mode in *Zapiski*.

Somoff discerns the twin births of character interiority and a new authorial perspective, which accesses that interiority, in the moment when Gerasim, a character from "Mumu," returns to his childhood home in the village at the end of an ordeal. He seems called to that place by the voice of his mother (though she has died), and this call alone, Somoff contends, suggests the existence of his inner life, for how could anyone else hear such a call? Finally, Gerasim, who is mute, falls willfully silent, a fact that seems to suggest that a life exists within him of which he chooses not to speak.<sup>162</sup> At the story's conclusion, Gerasim is "as serious and steady as before," but admits no society and has no need for it. I would suggest that his narratively significant indifference is prefigured by characters in *Zapiski* such as Kas'yan ("everywhere is good") and Arkhip ("how wondrously peasants die") who are used by the hunter to substantiate a transitory present. Gerasim's silence bespeaks an inner life, as Somoff demonstrates, but that inner life is set to rest within his origin. It is therefore resealed. Interiority tokens discord more than indifference, a state in which characters dissolve into the details they perceive.

However, the configuration of interiority as Somoff describes it accords with the corresponding place of the narrator, even though it does not establish the grounds for an interiorized character, except by way of contrast and lack. The drama of inner life is left to Turgenevian characters who, unlike Gerasim, are neither indifferent nor at home. By contrast, the narrator is invited to occupy Gerasim's place: "...the hero's disinterested, time- and space-unbound existence ('And Gerasim is still living') finds its closest counterpart in the authorial exemption from temporal and spatial constraints."<sup>163</sup>

Authorial positions of omniscience are often described in opposition to the constraints they supersede. In Bakhtin's analysis, it is only through the author's absolute concentration on the hero that he exists at all.<sup>164</sup> In such concentration, the author empties himself of the self-interest that defines him as an embodied human being. Audrey Jaffe also describes omniscience in terms of dependency, albeit from a different perspective. She describes "a tension between a voice that implies presence and the lack of any character to attach it to, between a narratorial configuration that refuses character and the characters it requires to define itself."<sup>165</sup> Jaffe reads the co-dependence between a disinterested narrator and an interested character as an attempt to

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<sup>161</sup> I would posit that "Mumu" was not appended to *Zapiski* because it occurs on an estate outside Moscow, unmotivated by the wandering exploits of a hunter.

<sup>162</sup> Somoff, *Imperative of Reliability*, pp. 124-5.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, trans. Vadim Liapunov (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 13.

<sup>165</sup> Audrey Jaffe, *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), p. 5.

participate in but simultaneously elude “the larger cultural gaze” that omniscience indicates. In these accounts, positions of omniscience acquire their unique traits in opposition to characters, whether by consummating the other (Bakhtin) or projecting onto the other unwanted conditions and constraints (D. A. Miller, Jaffe).<sup>166</sup>

Building on the theoretical premise that narration and characterization are linked, I am now in a position to describe narration in *Zapiski* in connection with the development of character sketched thus far. Character, I have suggested, is distinguished by the presence (or at least possibility) of inner life. In more general terms, character can be defined by independent action.<sup>167</sup> In section one, the limits of vision reached by both the hunter and Kas’yan suggested the outlines of their characters. In section three, I traced the emergence of character from behind the act of perception that, for a time, held a bay “comparisons to inner life” and enabled the celebration of the particular without such comparisons. Inner life, however, returned in the form of social incoherence (rather than connectivity) as characters began to emerge from types. In “Svidanie,” the hunter becomes a character when he lunges toward Akulina, striving, not unlike the valet, to be other than he is. By the time “Zhivye moshchi” was written, the celebration of the particular as a means to recover universality in the present is lost to a distant realm. Finally, in *Asya*, character and narrator are brought under a cultural gaze that displaces them both.

Although *Zapiski* does not achieve the negative position of authorial distance, two challenges are posed to the autonomous mode of narration in parallel to the emergence of character from type that sketch that position’s conditions. First, readers are exempted from the place of action, no longer drawn in by the effects of immediacy (the second person ‘you’). In “Malinovaia voda,” for example, they form a contrast to ‘we’ in the story-world. Second, the hunter-narrator enters the same plane and assumes the same determinations of the characters he observes. In both cases, the core promises of place enter into conflict.

“Ermolai i mel’ nichika” begins with apperceptive narration, addressing readers in order to evoke immediacy (“you search out a place around the edge of the forest <...> you wait) and then shifts to the autonomous mode to establish a type (“Imagine a man of about forty years...” (4:21-22). Despite the transition between these modes, shifting from within the scene to far beyond it, there is no significant distance assumed between the location of readers and that of the hunter. This is a time-honored literary method: as Gallagher argues, establishing referential connection legitimized fiction before fictionality offered its own grounds of legitimacy. The world established by the hunter is thus legitimized through his reference to readers, yet it is also the privileged place of hunters, who heighten their senses and relax their minds, sometimes to the point of “that sleep which only hunters know.” In the previous section, I discussed the motif of

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<sup>166</sup> Jaffe’s account is subject to the critique leveled by Dorrit Cohn at D. A. Miller’s *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), which, Cohn argues, “applies power relations as a theme to the formal relations that pertain between novelistic narrators and fictional characters.” “Optics and Power in the Novel,” *New Literary History*, vol. 26, no. 1 (1995), p. 4. In the omniscience debate, I believe we may draw too sharp a boundary between private and public thoughts when we ascribe a sense of magic to literature. The point I take from Miller and Jaffe is not that authors control or dominate their characters, as Dorrit Cohn has argued, but that they express broader cultural needs. As I argue in section three, the private thoughts of Turgenev’s character begin “to be heard” when types refuse the judgments leveled on them, from *Asya*’s challenge (“you disapprove?”) to Chertopkhanov’s indignation (“he, taken in this way!”). Productive though it has been to consider the limitations of actuality in contrast to those of literature, it is also productive to consider that our inability to read others’ minds do not alone define knowability. Literary interiority, at least in Turgenev’s writing, is steeped in the projected opinions of others, revealing it to be a circuit of exchange between the internal and the external.

<sup>167</sup> Bal, *Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, pp. 25-36.

sleep as a way to create a momentary absence of any particular consciousness that seems to leave readers in a world perceived by no one.

As readers of *Zapiski okhotnika* note, sleep is also a device for establishing a vantage point into scenes otherwise impossible to witness.<sup>168</sup> This is precisely what happens in “Ermolai i mel’nichika.” The hunter, pretending to sleep to overhear a conversation between Ermolai and the miller’s wife, escapes the grip of readers and establishes a world unfamiliar to them. He thus approximates an objective and nearly omniscient narration (approaching the possibility of accessing inner life): “Она оперла локти на колени, положила лицо на руки <...> Ермолай бросил несколько еловых веток на огонь; ветки тотчас дружно затрещали, густой белый дым повалил ему прямо в лицо. – Чего твой муж нас в избу не пустил?” [She leaned her elbows on her knees and placed her face in her hands. Yermolay sat with his back to me and was engaged in laying sticks on the fire <...> Yermolay threw a few fir fronds on the fire; at once they broke into a universal crackling and thick white smoke poured straight into his face. ‘Why didn’t your husband let us into the hut?’] (4:27/43). This sense of objectivity dissolves when the narrator switches to an address to the readers: “Надобно сказать читателю, почему я с таким участием посмотрел на Арину” [I must tell the reader why I looked at Arina with such curiosity] (4:28).

The narrator can articulate his knowledge only to readers, whereas among characters he seems trapped in ignorance—an effect symbolized by his comparatively limited perspective. For example, the end of “Ermolai i mel’nichika” recalls the scene of tense silence in “Malinovaia voda.” The apperceptive mode (usually employing second-person plural) becomes more limited to the character of the hunter. A flock of geese fly above the hunter and Ermolai (who refuses to answer his questions) and land in a nearby river, whence the two traveled from the story’s first scene. From this place, we have entered the limitations of perspective. When the story ends in sleep (“We burrowed ourselves in the hay and fell asleep”), nothing remains outside its frame.

From the immediacy in which the story began to the background on its types and the characterization of the hunter, only readers occupy an external position throughout the changes. It is for this reason that the hunter seems ironized, superseded by a higher authorial (readerly) vantage point. We may feel as though we have all the cultural authority of the hunter as well as the seemingly superior authority of peasant characters. Yet all we really have is exemption from social divisions which, moreover, our expectations nevertheless call forth. Despite its promises to the contrary, then, place demands bringing such expectations into an experience of immediacy which is meant to exceed them.

I conclude this section with a reading of “Khor’ i Kalinych” to elaborate on the second challenge to omniscience: the demotion of the narrator to the level of the character. Arguing that “Khor’ i Kalinych” signals a major contribution to the depiction of peasants in Russian prose, Alexei Vdovin provides a framework for us to examine the emergence of character from type as well as the characterization of the first-person narration that initially accompanies it.<sup>169</sup> He shows, first, that peasant consciousness is presented in the language of Hegelian philosophy unites the representation of inner life with typological binaries. In this regard, as Vdovin points out, Khor’ is transformed from his ordinary peasant status (a nameless serf) to a type who interests the hunter; Khor’ acquires the name Khor’ only after he rebuilds his hut on land at the edge of his owner’s estate and transitions to quitrent payments from the more onerous corvée labor.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Somoff, *Imperative of Reliability*, p. 116.

<sup>169</sup> Vdovin, “Nevedomyi mir,” pp. 303-8.

<sup>170</sup> *ibid.*, p. 306.

When the hunter-narrator enters Khor's hut, he enters, for the first and last time (with the exception of "Biriuk" [The Loner]) the home of a peasant. Khor' is settled in a place which he has (unlike so many of the cycle's peasants) built for himself. As such settlement suggests, Khor' answers to the demands for social stability and he further establishes this value by insisting on hierarchical perspectives. For example, though he is ambitious in his resettlement and implied trading practices, he is also careful to situate himself only where he will not be disempowered (that is, split in the manner of Asya). When the narrator suggests he buy his freedom, Khor' comments to himself in an aside—a hint of his inner life, though apparently not a tormented one for the fact of its externalization. "Попал Хорь в вольные люди, — продолжал он вполголоса, как будто про себя, — кто без бороды живет, тот Хорю и набольший" ['If Khor was among free people,' he continued in a low mutter, as though speaking to himself, 'then everyone without a beard would be a bigger fish than Khor'] (4:12/26).

Such is the ideal combination offered by Kas'yan, only reversed. Whereas Kas'yan has no need for a home, Khor' has no need for freedom. He already has what he wants: power, limited in some ways but exercised over his family in others. Khor' is thus poised between type and character, indifference and longing: he is rooted in the status into which he was born yet carefully attempts to exceed or at least command it. Khor's sense of stability coupled with his ambition constitute a challenge to the narrator: he knows (and listens to) social expectations, and candidly applies them to the hunter.

Building on Vdovin's claim that Khor's individualistic depiction emerges in relationship to the hunter's (that is, through binary typology), I suggest that the stabilizing force of Khor's character ("he truly understood his position") subordinates the hunter in the process of their mutual constitution. In the final scenes of the story, a dialogue is staged between the peasant characters on the topic of their relationship to their owner, Polutykin, their differing opinions articulate the outline of the hunter as a landowner and thus a socially embodied character. The transformation is complete when, pressed by Khor's inquiries, he admits what no future third-person narrator of Turgenev's would admit: "— Что же ты, батюшка, живешь в своей вотчине? — Живу" ['Well, sir, do you live on your estate?' 'I do.'] (4:20/34). (In the Russian original, "I live" underscores the existence of the speaker in the time-and-place of the story-world.) Unable to turn these questions back on Khor', the hunter departs this singular peasant home.

The ultimately conflicting demands of immediacy and typology thus entrap the narrator into the constraints of a character: restless, ill-at-ease, "axiologically yet-to-be."<sup>171</sup> Underlining these aspects of character in Turgenev's writing are social difference, expectation, and ambition, and shifts in narrative perspective mitigate their effects. In the process, authorial position retains the celebration of the particular in the elision of interest: a place beyond embodiment. As Bakhtin and others suggest, this place is possible only through juxtaposition. Only when a narrator is focused on a character's inner strife is he able to overcome his own. Such is the specter of place which the cycle attempts to render as an object of representation before transferring it into the realm of the author.

## V. *Coda: Nostalgia*

"Pevtsy" summarizes this chapter's findings by marking literature's entry into the place of the peasant—here, a tavern which brings together features and themes interspersed throughout

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<sup>171</sup> Bakhtin, "Author and Hero," p. 12.

the cycle—and staging its ultimate exit. This story recreates the ravaged landscape that is first sketched in “Khor’ i Kalinych” and returns, as we shall see at the end of this section, in the opening pages of Turgenev’s best-known novel, *Ottsy i deti*. This landscape brings together the values of place thus far described. Koltovka, the village in which this story is set, is framed in its description as a painting, “an unhappy sight,” rendered nearly shapeless by the ravine that spills over roads and splits the scene like a crack in its middle.<sup>172</sup> Abandoned by absentee landowners, who are marked as non-Russian, this landscape projects a combination of a national past and a sacred present, sacred because it possesses the exclusive significance of the here-and-now. This significance is nationalized in its connection to a stylized peasant culture. Recalling “Smert’,” that culture is little more than an awareness of death, time’s fleeting nature, and in, “Kas’yan,” a principled view of exilic detachment. Such a landscape is unknown to those forms of literature stylized as inherently distant from it, that is, in principle, all forms of literature, except those which articulate themselves through negation.

All that passes before Koltovka’s landscape thus cannot challenge its significance, which lies within change itself, though this change congeals into a stable, nationalized referent. As the materialization of this space within a space, the tavern which served as the first inspiration for this story as a “physiognomy” is also a refuge, nicknamed “Pritynnyi,” which means providing shelter. It unites nearly all the wandering characters of *Zapiski*. Here, the hunter encounters domestic servants, coachmen, Turkish-born crown serfs, merchants, and retired soldiers. I have argued that wanderers throughout the cycle legitimize a new form of literature as belonging to a tradition undetermined in content, style, and theme. We also saw how dislocated peasants, disastrously close to internally tormented characters, are only a shade away from wanderers. In the transformation from undetermined wandering to undefined types, the new literature is revealed as, like even the most stable and immediate peasants, involved in the blind-spots of the past rather than a bulwark against them.

In “Pevtsy,” wanderers settle in a single place in relation to one another, performing various functions. Two figures create tension and transition between scenes in the singing competition, another measures the rise and resolution of conflict, and two others serve as models for narration. One such model is the tavern-keeper, described “a careful man and an egoist [who] prefers to remain on the sidelines.” The second is a music *savant* with the nickname “Dikii-barin” (savage-nobleman). This story’s cast of wanderers, setting the stage for a song which moves everyone in the tavern beyond themselves in its aesthetic force, fulfill the limits of their potential in Turgenev’s realist experiment. Together, they deliver and then rescind the promise of place most dramatically.

The song that fulfils this promise begins as the singer covers his face and reveals it again, now as a “death-like” mask. In this transformation, he becomes nothing in himself so that he can unite the crowd in the tavern. His song provokes descriptions through which literature manifests its unique capabilities, mimicking the immediacy of the oral experience but adding to it drawn-out expositions possible only in written form. Rather than demarcating the reader’s absence from the scene of the song, then, emphatically written descriptions add depth to it. In fact, by building on the reader’s absence from the scene, these descriptions provoke the longing which the song itself establishes. The narrator’s demonstrable literariness—his descriptive powers—locate us in the present even as that present expands to a sense of the universal beyond it: “Первый звук его голоса был слаб и неровен и, казалось, не выходил из его груди, но принесся откуда-то издалека, словно залетел случайно в комнату” [The first sound his voice gave was weak and

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<sup>172</sup> Christopher Ely argues that negative depictions of landscapes are illuminated through nationalist ideology, specifically, as negations of western models. *This Meager Nature*, pp. 190-212.



uneven, seeming to emerge not from his chest but to have been carried from somewhere far away, just as if it had flown by accident into the room] (4:240/162). Second-person plural pronouns shift to the third, but in this instance, readers are included in that subject and the mood in the story itself is connected rather than divided.

No one is forced into their unique perspectives, and no one feels the pressure of expectations, neither in front of readers nor each other. Even the singer forgets his audience. His inner life is externalized and becomes that of his audience: “the barely noticeable inner quiver of passion, which plunges like an arrow into the soul of the listener.” The song does not respond to judgments but oversteps them: “Русская, правдивая, горячая душа звучала и дышала в нем и так и хватала вас за сердце, хватала прямо за его русские струны” [The honest, fiery soul of Russia resounded and breathed through it and quite simply seized us by the heart, plucked directly at our Russian heart-strings] (4:241). What is offered to us as the nation, that is, an impossibly abstract expanse, is offered as an immediate present sharper than our own.

When the tensions of a disparate crowd are overcome with national sentiment, the hunter-narrator has a memory, yet it does not shed light on his unique inner life. It is a singular detail. A seagull stands on a distant shore, wings open to the sea, inviting interpretation and blocking it, like all the best realist descriptions. To ensure that this detail, despite its symbolic potential, does not lead us away from the scene and into the various perspectives and histories which constitute it, the narrator frames it by the simple repetition, “I recalled [the seagull], listening to Yakov.” The sense that everything leads, ineluctably, to the here-and-now of the tavern is evoked through a kind of refrain that allows narration to transition between the event and the various details which comprise it. Repeatedly, the phrase ‘he sang’ is used to introduce different descriptions of the song’s effects before returning, once more, to the song. This refrain and the variations that follow it suggest the narrator’s own song-like capabilities. With them, he creates a single, elongated note from which all things—historical events, tormented individuals—inevitably return. Like the effects of immediacy throughout the cycle, this atmosphere is dissolved by the interruptions it invites: expectation.

When Perevlesov (Dikii-barin) breaks the silence with a barely muttered utterance, “Yasha,” he corrupts the scene he had hoped to preserve by naming the experience and pronouncing the victor of a competition. Several figures, free-loaders dependent on favors, rush to Yakov as to a potential beneficiary. Finally, the tavern-keeper, a watchful narrator in his own right, issues the reward in alcohol. These potential forms of narration are those who, just on the edges of the scene, reward and judge it. By contrast, the hunter leaves the scene to hold onto the song that issued from it; it is not place he yearns for after all, but something ephemeral which is produced by it. Instead of connection with his nation, the hunter attempts once more to find one with readers in the experience of nature. But here he cannot escape their expectations just as he cannot erase his own. In a departure from the promises of “Les i step’,” the hunter now finds no relief in “the deep silence of an exhausted nature” (4:243). Left alone, he builds a new contrast: literature, a lost but still sacred essence, and the peasant, literature’s failed promise.

This contrast is illustrated when the hunter returns to the tavern to witness an “unhappy sight” that recalls the description of Koltovka with which he began: “Я подошел к окошку и приложился лицом к стеклу. Я увидел невеселую, хотя пеструю и живую картину: всё было пьяно — всё, начиная с Якова” [I went up to the little window and pressed my face to the glass. I saw an unhappy, though a motley and lively enough scene: everyone was drunk — everyone, beginning with Yakov] (4:243). This scene, framed by the window, invites comparison with Svetlana Alpers’ study of Pieter Bruegel’s paintings of peasants. The parallel is plausible given this story’s references to other classical (or in this case Renaissance) artistic models such

as the pastoral.<sup>173</sup> Bruegel's paintings, Alpers argues, are typically distinguished by the presence of an outsider, who raises questions which Bruegel (and Turgenev) seem intent to leave unresolved: "Is it that the outsiders cannot, or will not take part? How does one experience such expansive pleasure if not by joining in the dance? Can one join if one is not a peasant among peasants? <...> We can enter, and learn, but we cannot stay."<sup>174</sup> Motely yet alive (*pestraia i zhivaia*), the celebrants are too immersed in experience to compose the more intelligible yet simultaneously more immediate experience which the song—and literature—provide.

Just before the hunter tears himself away from the window, he makes a suggestive observation: Pervlesov is nowhere to be found. When the hunter departs, he searches for the authorial place which this character creates. Pervlesov is described as solid and stable, much like Gerasim from "Mumu," with a "terrible visage softened by the grace of his movements." Significantly, Pervlesov has also seen the turmoil of inner life but comes out the other side, resealed. Such is the transformation the hunter seeks for himself as a third-person narrator who is attuned to place (represented by the song) yet distant from it. For Pervlesov, turmoil is linked to his own unplaceable social status: "he did not look like a house-serf, nor a merchant, nor an impoverished official in retirement, nor a ruined small estate-owner, nor a huntsman, nor a beggar" (4:237). The identity that supersedes all discord is one which is grounded in a love of art. A love of art is the very basis for the hunter's existence. In Pervlesov, we see how elite culture seeks its own identity in its acculturation even as it tries to unify that acculturation with the image of the peasant. Dikii-barin is both, and his passion for music is what quiets his inner life.

В этом человеке было много загадочного; казалось, какие-то громадные силы угрюмо покоились в нем, как бы зная, что раз поднявшись, что сорвавшись раз на волю, они должны разрушить и себя и всё, до чего ни коснутся; и я жестоко ошибаюсь, если в жизни этого человека не случилось уже подобного взрыва, если он, наученный опытом и едва спасшись от гибели, неумолимо не держал теперь самого себя в ежовых рукавицах (4:237).<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Leslie O'Bell, "The Pastoral in Turgenev's 'The Singers': Classical Themes and Romantic Variations," *The Russian Review*, vol. 63, no. 2 (2004), p. 280. "the pastoral was never purely an idyllic mode, even when Theocritus originated it, and its history from Virgil onward has shown it to be the way of writing most suited for the self-conscious encounter of the sophisticated writer and the simple rustics." She finds the most parallels to classical models in Virgil's third Eclogue, which develops "the crucial element of 'amoebian song,' the classical version of the singing context which figures so prominently in Turgenev's story. ('Amoebian song' is defined as an alternating, answering, or responsive song). op. cit.

<sup>174</sup> Svetlana Alpers, "Bruegel's Festive Peasants," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, vol. 6., no 3/4 (1972-1973), p. 176. Masing-Delic's exploration of the dichotomy between observers and participants, a major theme of nineteenth century writing, epitomized by Turgenev's 'superfluous man' of his 1851 novella, *Dnevnik lishnego cheloveka* [*Diary of a Superfluous Man*], relate to this divide, considered here in terms of shifts in literary forms. Masing-Delic argues that a boundary persists in Turgenev's writing between "feeling and observing mystery," which renders "the work of creating stories [split] between those who act and those who record." "Hidden Spaces in Turgenev's Short Prose: What They Conceal and What They Show," in *Turgenev: Art, Ideology and Legacy*, ed. by Joe Andrew and Robert Reid (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 23-40.

<sup>175</sup> [There was much that was enigmatic about this man; it seemed as if certain mighty powers sullenly lurked within him, knowing, as it were, that if they were once roused, if they once broke free, they would be sure to destroy both the man himself and everything they came into contact with; and if I am not terribly mistaken, precisely such an outburst had occurred in the life of his man, and he, schooled by the

Perevlesov is a reformed character, sketching the outlines of third-person omniscience by directing his interest outward. The milieu that surrounds him is held together only through his concentration. (He is silent except when he dictates its actions with demands such as “begin!”) Existing among this milieu, Perevlesov creates the conditions for a song and disappears once it ceases. The hunter, leaving the tavern, takes with him what is most important from that song: the sense of loss that framed it from the beginning.

In the conclusion to “Pevtsy,” the hunter hears an echo stretching across the empty night: “«Антропка! Антропка-а-а!..» — кричал он с упорным и слезливым отчаянием, долго, долго вытягивая последний слог” [‘Антропка! Антропка-а-а!’ he shouted with insistent and tearful desperation, prolonging and prolonging the last syllable] (4:244/166). With its elongated final syllable, this call is described like the song in the tavern, changing its tone in repetition, like an aria. When an answer from Антропка comes “as if from another world” to ask why he is beckoned, the gloomy voice becomes gleeful, answering that Антропка’s aunt wishes to flog him. The singing competition’s reward thus transforms into punishment, the line between them already blurred. Having been at the source of some many echoes, hunter has seen the promises of immediacy fulfilled, disappointingly, to the point of their own contradictions. Here, the valences of place gather and ultimately expel the hunter, who now wanders into new forms of the realism he has established.

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Settling into place of the noble estate, Turgenev’s later novels, *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* and *Ottsy i deti* contain their central themes in the return journey through the countryside in which the place traversed in *Zapiski* is glimpsed once more. When the protagonist of *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* returns to his childhood estate, exhausted by the failures of his life since he has left it, he dwells on the memory of his mother, a peasant, and his father, a nobleman who traces a line of characters from Styopa to Asya in his attempts to be other than he is. It is therefore not only the superfluous man, a cultural stereotype of noble identity, that suffers “detachment.” Understood as displacement, superfluity is based in the inability, tragically rendered throughout Turgenev’s work, to be present in one’s place – socially, nationally, and experientially.

More noble than he is “savage,” Lavretsky’s character builds its split background in the manner of Perevlesov (Dikii-barin) as he is acculturated in his taste but drawn to origin. While the return to the village inaugurates a plot of “passions, twists and turns” (as Turgenev’s had described it), that plot ultimately settles Lavretsky’s inner life into the relative peace of nostalgia. He gives up on desire, redirecting it into his visions of the countryside itself so that they might merge with place. This final escape, from plot and character, is augured by his return journey at the novel’s beginning:

...он глядел... и эта свежая, степная, тучная голь и глушь, эта зелень, эти длинные холмы, овраги с приземистыми дубовыми кустами, серые деревеньки, жидкие березы —вся эта, давно им не виданная, русская картина навевала на его душу сладкие и в то же время почти скорбные чувства, давила грудь его каким-то приятным давлением (7:183).<sup>176</sup>

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experience and barely saved from perishing, implacably held himself in check with a rod of iron.] Freeborn, 158.

<sup>176</sup> [He gazed....and this fresh, lush nakedness and wilderness of the steppe, this greenery, these long low hills, the ravines with their ground-hugging clumps of oak trees, the grey little villages, the flowing

In this passage, the landscape's details combine into a singular "this," and finally, "all this," the here-and-now that bears the trace of something universal. Still, that universal evokes pain as much as pleasure. The combination describes nostalgia, a "mania of longing" whereby we take pleasure in loss.<sup>177</sup> Lavretsky's thoughts turn to his mixed parentage and his own dislocations but, alternating with observations, they do not penetrate deep enough to stir his feelings beyond the present moment. In fact, the apparent conflicts of the countryside are leavened by his memory. The past cannot change, a thought that is as painful as it is reassuring. The place of the peasant thus emerges as it was always imagined, stable in its ephemerality. The fields that rush past Lavretsky keep his memories from sinking too far beyond them, while those memories diffuse the volatility of the present that Turgenev's hunter had already discovered.

The scene of return that opens *Ottsy i deti* frames the peasant countryside from the opposite temporal perspective: expectation.

Места, по которым они проезжали, не могли назваться живописными. Поля, все поля, тянулись вплоть до самого небосклона, то слегка вздымаясь, то опускаясь снова; кое-где виднелись небольшие леса, и, усеянные редким и низким кустарником, вились овраги, напоминая глазу их собственное изображение на старинных планах екатерининского времени. Попадались и речки с обрытыми берегами, и крошечные пруды с худыми плотинами, и деревеньки с низкими избушками под темными, часто до половины разметанными крышами, и покривившиеся молотильные сарайчики с плетеными из хвороста стенами и зевающими воротницами возле опустелых гумен, и церкви, то кирпичные с отвалившеюся кое-где штукатуркой, то деревянные с наклонившимися крестами и разоренными кладбищами. Сердце Аркадия понемногу сжималось. Как нарочно, мужички встречались все обтерханные, на плохих клячонках <...> «Нет, — подумал Аркадий, — небогатый край этот, не поражает он ни довольством, ни трудолюбием; нельзя, нельзя ему так остаться, преобразования необходимы... но как их исполнить, как приступить?..» (8: 205).<sup>178</sup>

In this passage, the character looks, but a third-person narrator speaks: "this place could not be called picturesque." The peasant countryside's abandonment to the past produces in Arkady a sense of shame, for he sees with fresh eyes a place that is deadened by a lack of temporal tension, flattened out into a present that now appears merely irrelevant, like an old map.

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shapes of birches – the whole of this picture of Russia, which he had not seen for so long, evoked in him sweet and simultaneously anguished feelings and oppressed his heart with a kind of pleasant sadness.]

*Home of the Gentry*, trans. Richard Freeborn. (Baltimore, MA: Penguin Books, 1970), 82

<sup>177</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>178</sup> [The area in which they were traveling couldn't be described as picturesque. Field after field stretched as far the horizon, first gently ascending, then descending; here and there were little woodlands and winding ravines covered in sparse low-lying shrubs that called to mind their characteristic representation on ancient maps in the time of Catherine the Great. They came upon little streams with cleared banks, tiny ponds with fragile dams, little villages with low peasant huts under dark roofs often missing half their thatch, small crooked threshing barns with walls of woven brushwood and gaping doorways beside abandoned threshing floors, and churches, some made of brick with the plaster falling off, others of wood with slanted crosses and overgrown cemeteries. Arkady's heart gradually sank. And, as luck would have it, the peasants they passed were all in tatters and riding pathetic nags <...> 'No,' thought Arkady, 'this land isn't very rich; it strikes one neither by its prosperity nor by its industriousness; it's impossible, impossible for it to stay like this; reforms are essential....but how to implement them, where to begin?' ] Katz, *Fathers and Sons*, 10.

That vision is complete when peasants pass into the frame as if in direct response to Arkady's pained heart. Though his perspective on the countryside seems anticipatory, it is but another version of nostalgia; everything in the scene speaks to what is absent from it. Descriptions are flattened into the historical conditions that have suppressed description itself, for there is no prosperity to be found, no overgrowing vegetation or abundance. The conclusion drawn at the end of this passage indicates Arkady's status as a character who is yet to reconcile to his type, troubling over "what is to be done" and attempting to change what Lavretsky in *Dvorianskoe gnezdo* knows cannot be changed. The unspoken answer to Arkady's question tokens the value of place that *Zapiski okhotnika* had established. Place is the inevitable return to the nature of things, a present embattled against a past which it nevertheless creates.

## Chapter 2

### Master and Serf: Lev Tolstoy

#### *Introduction*

In 1852, Tolstoy begins work on a project called *Roman pomeschchika* [A Landowner's Novel] as the first of many attempts to write himself out of literature; it was to be a work more useful than "silly stories."<sup>179</sup> Years later, amidst another impending crisis, he concludes *Anna Karenina* (1874-77) not with the death of its titular heroine, but on the landowner's estate. From the novel, we return to a place configured in Tolstoy's work as existing beyond fiction. The landowner who occupies this place is nothing without his counterpart: the serf, and after the reform of 1861, the peasant laborer. In *Anna Karenina*, Levin finds reconciliation among peasants whose lives are presented as more urgent yet also more peaceful than anything that came before them, a "mesmerizing image [and] a 'still point' around which the disorder and urgency of a properly novelistic time will turn."<sup>180</sup> In the attempt to settle in this point, Tolstoy exemplifies an essential tension in realist representation. "Life itself," a value category expressed in the peasant's image, is more valuable than fiction, embodying, particularly in the novel, the endless journeying of speculation.

In this chapter, I explore the internal tensions developing within literature as a self-conscious project and, indeed, a project of self-consciousness. Stylized as the genre without rules, the novel has come to be identified with the self-conscious or reflective subject, a locus of critique and analysis that 'acts on' raw material, including the narrative paradigms that preceded it. In an analysis of one of Tolstoy's first novelistic experiments, *Roman pomeschchika*, I reconstruct the historical emergence of this subject and trace its connection to the styles of narration within the novel genre. Studies of the novel often focus on point of view and free indirect discourse as "transmission points," to use Jameson's phrase, for the subject's constitution.<sup>181</sup> "Formalizing" the subject, these narrative dynamics also reveal its preconditions.

Drawing on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) as part of mid-century Russia's social imaginary, I locate the precondition for novelistic subjectivity in Tolstoy's early experiment within a concept of life that is expressed and embodied in the peasant's image. To illustrate the evolution of perspectival dynamics from "Utro pomeschchika" [A Landowner's Morning] (1856), a published excerpt of the abandoned *Roman pomeschchika* to *Anna Karenina*, I establish the peasant's narrative function as the medium within which subjects are defined. I also show how a dialectic of master and serf, uniquely configured, enters into the form of the Tolstoyan novel. Hegelian categories of "life" and "mere life" describe the peasant's ambiguous value in Tolstoy's novels as, first, a fantasy in which the subject is maintained as an independent being and, second, a glimpse into that subject's dependent and non-distinctive nature. As mere life, the peasant's image contains the very opposite value that it appears to project, one which I locate in the peasant nightmares of *Anna Karenina* and, equally vividly, beneath the surface of the most idyllic scenes of landowner life. Though the Tolstoyan peasant functions as the raw

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<sup>179</sup> Tolstoy, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 46, p. 151. Subsequent citations to Turgenev's *PSS* will appear parenthetically in the text, by volume and page number. Hugh McLean, among others, notes that Tolstoy was plagued by "the suspicion that making up stories is not a serious or worthy pursuit for a mature man." *In Quest of Tolstoy* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2008), p. 20.

<sup>180</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 157.

<sup>181</sup> *ibid.*, p. 154.

material on which the subject works and through which it finds purpose, scenes of master and serf interaction also intimate that no firm opposition exists between them. In this collapse, literature loses its bases in “life itself” and reflects instead a different version of the real, one more profoundly expressed in the dreams and contortions of fiction.

It has been said that the truth of self-division is the truth of the novel, a genre celebrated by theorists for its depiction of myriad consciousnesses as well as its preservation of a central one.<sup>182</sup> For many scholars of realism, the novel is the genre that “gave realism currency,” in large part for its development of narrative styles that facilitate the depiction of interiority.<sup>183</sup> Rendering a character’s unspoken thoughts produces an effect at once distinctly real and patently unreal. In real life, we cannot know what another person is thinking outside the complications of social communication and situation in which they might express their thoughts. Witnessing, in the novel, the difference between a character’s internal and external life, we witness the “truth” of alienation and dissimilarity. However, as Jameson contends, the alienated subject, or the one versus the many, is “not some conceptual error” even if the concept must be “rigorously historicized.”<sup>184</sup> Much like novelistic interiority, radically independent subjectivity is at once real and unreal, a form emergent from history but not therefore natural. With the subject at its center, the novel takes on the formidable task of establishing a unity from the contrasts that create it. As the quintessential other of Tolstoy’s novels, the peasant is found at the crossroads where his formulations of novelistic interiority, and indeed, the Tolstoyan novel as the subject’s bearer, is located.

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Before turning to analyses of the texts, I begin by contextualizing Tolstoy’s project to write a *Roman pomeshchika* – positing that project as a larger metaphor for the conflict between fiction and life that would come to be materialized as one between master and serf. At work on a number of projects in 1852, including his inaugural literary success, *Detsvo* [Childhood], Tolstoy documents in his diary a plan to write “something useful” (46:151). The unfinished *Roman pomeshchika* begins with a protest against fiction in a forward *not* for readers:

ПРЕДИСЛОВИЕ НЕ ДЛЯ ЧИТАТЕЛЯ А ДЛЯ АВТОРА. Главное основное чувство, которое будет руководить меня во всем этом романе – любовь к деревенской помещичьей жизни <...> Главная мысль сочинения: счастье есть добродетель. Юность чувствует это бессознательно, но различения страсти останавливают ее в стремлении к этой цели. И только опыт, ошибки, и несчастье заставляют, постигнут цель эту сознательно, единственно стремиться к ней и быть счастливым, презирая зло и спокойно перенося его (4:363).<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Hale, *Social Formalism*, p. 217.

<sup>183</sup> Brown, “The Logic of Realism,” p. 224.

<sup>184</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 153.

<sup>185</sup> [FORWARD NOT FOR THE READER BUT FOR THE AUTHOR. The essential sentiment which will guide me in this novel is love for the life of the landowner in the village. <...> The main idea of the work: happiness is virtue. A Youth senses this unconsciously, but the distractions of passion keep it from striving toward this goal. Only in experience, mistakes, and unhappiness does one grasp and enforce this goal unconsciously, simply striving toward it to be happy, disdaining evil but calmly bearing its burden] (Translation mine).

A love for the landowner's life that was to surface in Tolstoy's novel was, he specified, not grounded in romanticizations of the countryside but quite the opposite: its "simplicity and hardship." This outline belies considerations of happiness, virtue, striving, and disappointment that bear considerable conceptual weight. The right to happiness, for example, polemicalizes Hegelian conceptions of "The Unhappy Consciousness" as a subject who is insufficiently reconciled to the social order. For Tolstoy, as many scholars note, social institutions did not provide the basis for happiness, and one ought not to strive for reconciliation within them; happiness did not rest in social inclusion.

As the drafts of the unfinished *Roman pomeschchika* attest, obstacles to change on the estate were unconquerable, embodied most dramatically in recalcitrant serf labor and inherently dysfunctional relationships between masters and serfs. Such conditions created the ideal canvas for "experience," where the right to happiness emerges in failure; one grasps virtue by accommodating oneself to changelessness. Oddly enough, what is idealized about a landowner's life is its stagnation. For despite the disappointments of reality and inevitable personal failures, the subject remains independent in the very act of striving. One could not change the world, but one could change – or at least attempt to change – oneself.

The gesture against literary life which Tolstoy intends to make with a novel about a landowner has several valences. By the '50s, many among the nobility and the new, "rankless" classes were seeking to legitimize their identity in literary society, the latter group creating a new type of literary professional whose sole occupation was writing.<sup>186</sup> As much as writing was framed by questions of social identity for Tolstoy, it was also a matter of self-knowledge and psychology. As scholars have shown, Tolstoy's early literary endeavors reflect the need to systematize a moral code and subject his own behaviors and psychology to rigorous analysis.<sup>187</sup> Writing thus enacted the formation of a subject both in a social sense as someone with rank and purpose and in a moral sense as someone with principles. In a further demonstration of independence, the subject's principles were, ideally, independently conceived or at least self-consciously absorbed and tested. In writing a *Roman pomeschchika*, Tolstoy strives to establish his own literary practices as distinct from others.

Reflecting the preoccupations of the unfinished novel, "Utro pomeschchika" (1856) continues the effort to materialize the act of striving by casting it against a background from which it might emerge most sharply. Like the drafts to *Roman pomeschchika*, the influences evidenced in this work offers a window into the newly emergent needs of a changing social landscape and helps establish the stakes of the subject's emergence within it. In 1847, Tolstoy abandons study at the University of Kazan when he embarks on a comparative analysis of Catherine II's *Nakaz* [Instruction], the 1676 political treatise in which she laid out laws of governance, and Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Law*.<sup>188</sup> Nekhliudov, the protagonist of "Utro pomeschchika," reenacts Tolstoy's return from university to his family estate. As N. K. Gudzii remarks, Nekhliudov also attempts to establish his own form of enlightened absolutism among his serfs, reflecting the preoccupations of Tolstoy's study of the *Nakaz*.<sup>189</sup> In drafts of *Roman pomeschchika*, Tolstoy also included a plan for "aristocratic elections," demonstrating a growing

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<sup>186</sup> Eikhenbaum, *Raboty o L've Tolstom*, pp. 290-3.

<sup>187</sup> On diary writing and Tolstoy's diaries, see Ginzburg, *On Psychological Prose*, 221-270 and Irina Paperno, *Who, What Am I?: Tolstoy Struggles to Narrate the Self* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. 9-29.

<sup>188</sup> Inessa Mezhibovskaya, *Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time: A Biography of a Long Conversion, 1845-1881* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), p. 40.

<sup>189</sup> N. K. Gudzii, "Ot romana russkogo pomeschchika k utru pomeschchika," in *Tolstoi: Sbornik statei i materialov* (Moscow/Petersburg: Akademiia nauk, Institut mirovoi literatury, 1951), p. 344.



concern to legitimize and politicize noble identity.<sup>190</sup> That identity, already threatened by the “rankles classes,” came under fresh attack in 1856 when Alexander II announced his plans to liberate the serfs, leaving nobles unsure of their place in society.

In the same year, Tolstoy responded to these changes by attempting to liberate his own serfs in advance and on his own conditions.<sup>191</sup> When his serfs rejected this proposal, Tolstoy grew increasingly anxious, writing in a letter from 1856 that the choice facing the landowner after emancipation was between life and land. He feared that, with freedom and without land, peasants would revolt, and he argued that keeping peasants at work in the fields was the main priority, even if it meant renouncing landownership.<sup>192</sup> For the alternative to field labor was, in his view, a village proletariat, a word he used interchangeably with *bezrabortnyi* (without work). Despite its dysfunction, some argued, and in a similar spirit to Tolstoy’s letter, the master and serf relationship was necessary for stability.

Several years before plans for serfdom’s abolition were announced, Tolstoy read Gogol’s infamous “Vybrannye mesta iz perezpiski s druž’iami” [Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends] (1847), a celebration of the patriarchal character of serfdom, writing in his diary that the work “resonated like a song in my soul.”<sup>193</sup> In its celebration of relations between landowners and serfs, Gogol’s essay finds echoes in scenes in *Anna Karenina*. Suffice it to mention one passage described by Hugh McLean: “Levin perversely sympathizes with the unregenerate *krepostnik* (former serf-owner) whose hard-headed realism contrasts refreshingly with the wishy-washy liberalism of [others].”<sup>194</sup> Consistent throughout these accounts is Tolstoy’s vision of master and serf relations as an alternative to the unpredictable shifts of reform. Projecting the failure of that reform had the benefit of ensuring an interdependency between master and serf.

Against this background, the subject’s failure to materialize his reformist projects in Tolstoy’s early novelistic experiment (e.g. to enact “enlightened absolutism”) comes with a certain amount of joy. In the face of change, the subject turns inward and makes a project of his inner life. Such is the final resolution of Levin, the landowner hero of *Anna Karenina*: “Так же буду сердиться на Ивана кучера ... так же будет стена между святой святых моей души и другими, даже женой моей ... но жизнь моя теперь, вся моя жизнь ... имеет несомненный смысл добра, который я властен вложить в нее! (19:399).”<sup>195</sup> If there is disappointment in the failure of life to offer purpose and meaning of its own accord, there is comfort in maintaining the distinction between that life and the subject – one who powerfully inserts himself within life. A

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<sup>190</sup> Grigoryan (cited in the introduction) explores concerns about landowner identity as they impacted the shape of the Russian novel, tracing, in Tolstoy, a preoccupation with the nobility from his “youthful musing about the nobility as a corporate body that may act as a check on authority” in the *Roman pomeshchika* to the ending of *Anna Karenina* as “the radically closed gentry nest ... foregrounding the private realm of family life as an alternative to public institutions and the political experience of selfhood they offer.” *Noble Subjects*, p. 138.

<sup>191</sup> Eikhenbaum, *Raboty o L'Ve Tolstom*, p. 281.

<sup>192</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 282-3.

<sup>193</sup> Quoted in Mezhibovskaya, *Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time*, p. 28.

<sup>194</sup> McLean, *In Quest of Tolstoy*, p. 40.

<sup>195</sup> I’ll get angry in the same way at the coachman Ivan ... but my life now, my whole life ... has the unquestionable meaning of the good which it is in my power to put into it. All English translations are cited from Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, *Anna Karenina* (London, Penguin Classics, 2008), p. 817. Further translations are cited parenthetically within the text by page number after PSS.

life that cannot be subdued thus also becomes a value of stability along the lines of an anti-historical domesticity.<sup>196</sup>

Life and subject echo a number of related binaries that have been explored in Tolstoy's work, from nature and culture, to casual conditional and freedom, to belonging to a whole and becoming estranged from it.<sup>197</sup> Victor Shklovsky interprets this last problematic in political terms which may summarize the historical background I have sketched: "Tolstoy sought participation in the whole, but noble participation."<sup>198</sup> "Noble participation" perfectly describes the novelistic subject as Tolstoy constructs it: part of life, but distinct from it. To conclude this sketch, I echo the theoretical orientation of this dissertation, whereby "the radical difference of the social and cultural past" does not negate its "solidarity <...> with the present day."<sup>199</sup> Tolstoy's political investments are his own, but they are not strictly containable, illuminating broad issues of power and relationality rather than isolating them within his particular social status or political outlook. This chapter focuses on the ways in which social tensions of the past broaden into the present, largely through their narrative embodiments. The dynamics of master and serf are thus presented in what follows as abstract functions, reconstructed from the dynamics of point of view and free indirect discourse.

Section one, *The Emergence of the Novelistic Subject*, establishes the nature of the subject in relation to desire and situates that correlation in Hegelian categories with an analysis of the Lord and Bondsman parable from *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel's paradigm, known and rejected by Tolstoy, illuminates the stakes of that rejection as a view of sociality that imbricates the subject. It is here that the category of life emerges in relation to the constitution of the subject through point of view. In my analyses of "Utro pomeshchika," I locate the interiorization of the main character, Nekhliudov, in his interactions with serf characters. These interactions are attended by a sense of shame which I interpret as a glimpse into the reversible nature of master and serf. In this section, I also locate the subject in the figuration of the novelist. Section two, *The Nightmare of Mere Life*, is divided into two sub-sections, *Levin: The Dream of Life* and *Anna: The Peasant Torn Asunder*. Each sub-section traces the theme of shame as central to the characters of *Anna Karenina* and reveals the emergence of free indirect discourse from the subject-object split that is materialized in master and serf encounters. I draw parallels between the novel's two plots and argue that a form of sociality that is roundly rejected on the surface of the Tolstoyan novel in fact haunts its structure.

### I. *A Landowner's Morning: The Emergence of the Novelistic Subject*

It is an early May morning, before anyone else in the manor house is awake, when Tolstoy's first landowner hero has an epiphany. He paces the idyllic surroundings of the

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<sup>196</sup> Gary Saul Morson explores these values in *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in War and Peace* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).

<sup>197</sup> See, for example, Ginzburg, *On Psychological Prose*, 221-270, on freedom and casual conditionality; Donna Tussing Orwin *Tolstoy's Art and Thought: 1847-1880* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993) on nature and culture; and Gustafson, *Resident and Stranger* on motifs of separation and belonging.

<sup>198</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, *Lev Tolstoi* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1967), p. 58.

<sup>199</sup> Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, p. 18. Other scholars of Tolstoy have also engaged Jameson's model. Alexei Pavlenko, "Peasant as the Political Unconscious of *Anna Karenina*: Vengeance, Its Forms and Roots," *Tolstoy Studies Journal* XXVI (2014), 19-29. I refer Pavlenko below in my section on *Anna Karenina*. See also Vdovin, "Devilish Money and Peasant Ethics: Leo Tolstoy's Economic Imagination and Emplotment in 'Polikushka,'" *Russian Review*, 76 (2017), 53-71.

countryside deep in thought, searching for the solution to a problem too abstract to formulate: the very “laws of being” (*zakony bytiia*) (4:164). Desire seeks its object: first, “a voluptuous” (*sladostrastnyi*) image of a woman,” then, surprisingly, serfs, “этот простой, восприимчивый, неиспорченный класс народа!” [this simple, receptive, unperverted class of people] (4:165).<sup>200</sup> Nekhliudov’s youthful energy is not to be released far from a home to which he will return older and wiser. Rather, his *Bildung* will occur in his own backyard.

The erotic crescendo that builds toward fulfillment in a receptive peasantry is heightened by the “failures” that lead him to it. Nekhliudov entertains a number of possibilities before “a higher feeling” whispers to him “not that.” Finally, he exalts: “Оно так, оно так! – говорил он себе с восторгом ... это *то*, он испытывал новое для него чувство радостного волнения и восторга” [This is it! This! So it is! He said to himself in ecstasy ... This is *it*, he experienced a new sensation of joyful agitation and delight] (392-3; 378-9).

Desire, on many accounts, defines the modern subject. The ability to pursue desire constitutes notions of independence; the subjugation of objects through the act of desiring proves the subject’s distinction; desires intimates the subtle connection between what we cannot control and what defines our capacity to exert control. As the genre defined by such a subject, the nineteenth-century novel is, to a certain extent, based on themes of desire. Modeled in relation to that subject in its efforts to “act on” raw material (including inherited literary models), the novel shapes desire through the forms which resist it, creating, in the process, “that bedrock against which the desiring subject knows the break-up of hope and can finally measure everything that refuses its fulfillment.”<sup>201</sup> By proposing to alter, if not overcome, a constitutive social tension between master and serf, Nekhliudov also articulates fundamental desires of the Tolstoyan novel first, to stabilize that tension, and second, to explore possibilities beyond it.

In *Anna Karenina*, too, characters may seek social definition beyond the terms of master and serf in marriage to a peasant, but find themselves “trapped in the limits of a specific ideological consciousness ... beyond which that consciousness cannot go and between which it is condemned to oscillate.”<sup>202</sup> Yoon Sun Lee calls these potential plots the non-realization of possibility: what repeatedly does not happen; a limit toward which a text is impelled again and again.<sup>203</sup> The role of desire in “Utro pomeschchika” goes a step further than marking the limits of the world to which Nekhliudov accommodates himself. Although peasants appear to Nekhliudov as utterly malleable, readers know that serfs will, in fact, constitute “the bedrock” against which the landowner’s hopes are dashed. Still, they give shape to this desire, and this holds true, we shall see, even in disappointment.

It is important to note that desire, far from constituting some irrational or lawless force, is synonymous with interiority in the broadest sense. The association should complicate the apparent condemnation of passion in, for example, *Anna Karenina*. In “Utro pomeschchika,” it is striving beyond historical-givens, not relinquishing oneself to carnal desire, that is “good, but dangerous” (4:363). In what follows I suggest that the desiring subject is dangerous because history emerges from his efforts as the conditions that define him. Building on these correlations, I argue that novelistic subjectivity is, for Tolstoy, illuminated by the parable of Lord and

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<sup>200</sup> Translation by Louise and Aylmer Maude and Nigel J. Cooper. *Leo Tolstoy: Shorter Collected Fiction*, vol. 1 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), p. 378. Translations cited parenthetically in the text by page number after the *PSS*.

<sup>201</sup> Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, p.184.

<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>203</sup> Yoon Sun Lee, “Temporalized Invariance: Lukács and the Work of Form” in *Georg Lukács: The Fundamental Dissonance of Existence*, eds. Timothy Bewes and Timothy Hall (London, Continuum, 2011), p. 24.

Bondsman from *The Phenomenology of Spirit* insofar as this parable establishes a basis for the connection between subject and desire, to which I now turn: “self-consciousness is desire in general.”<sup>204</sup> Among Tolstoy’s intellectual influences and, without a doubt, a feature of mid-century Russian culture, Hegel’s categories illuminate the peasant’s function in Tolstoy’s narrative to maintain, and at times to challenge, a fundamental distinction between master and serf.

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It is well known that Tolstoy rejected Hegel’s philosophy. However, the dynamics of consciousness in Tolstoy’s writing, situated as it is in the context of serfdom and its aftermath, reveal striking similarities to Hegel’s concerns. Such similarities are traced by Irina Paperno and Victoria Juharyan to Tolstoy’s “Khozianin i rabotnik” [Master and man] (1895) and may be further illuminated in relation to the subject’s constitution in the Tolstoyan novel through narrative perspective (elaborated below).<sup>205</sup> Inessa Mezhibovskaya also situates Tolstoy’s ongoing concerns with religion in relation to his study of the *Phenomenology* at Kazan, which followed his enthrallment with the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.<sup>206</sup> It was the chapter from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, “The Unhappy Consciousness,” the stage that immediately follows the Lord and Bondsman encounter, that Tolstoy pointedly rejected. The major issue, as he saw it, was that happiness ought not to demand the reintegration of the subject into the social order, as Hegel had elsewhere argued. This argument, elaborated in the *Philosophy of Right* (1820), characterized the reception of Hegel’s philosophy in Russia in the ‘30s and led to the “reconciliation with reality” that spread in literary circles.<sup>207</sup> According to Mezhibovskaya, “quite inadvertently, Hegelianism pushed Tolstoy, a Rousseauian ... who wanted to act, out of society.”<sup>208</sup> While the terms of integration in Hegel’s philosophy are rejected by Tolstoy, the writer was no less invested in its need than the rest of his generation, grappling with the limits of romantic solipsism, an attachment to rationality as the basis for freedom, and the effects of determinism and social conditionality on conceptions of the human person.<sup>209</sup>

The Lord and Bondsman passage in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* describes the birth of self-consciousness within the interaction of two consciousnesses. Scholars suggest that this passage has attained its fame because of its focus on social interaction. Indeed, the parable has been read as “a minimal, proto-society.”<sup>210</sup> The passage marks the moment in which attention shifts from the workings of the mind to the workings of society, placing these processes in connection to one

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<sup>204</sup> I refer throughout to A. V. Miller’s translation, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 105.

<sup>205</sup> Paperno, *Who, What Am I?*, 107-111. Victoria Juharyan, “Tolstoy’s own Master and Slave Dialectic: “Khozianin i rabotnik” as a Rewriting of a Hegelian Narrative,” *Slavic and East European Journal*, 61:1 (2017), 29-48.

<sup>206</sup> Mezhibovskaya, *Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time*, 39.

<sup>207</sup> The reconciliation to reality – a conservative turn among the elite – is associated with Belinsky who was guided in his interpretations by such readers of Hegel as Nikolai Stankevich and Mikhail Bakunin.

<sup>208</sup> Mezhibovskaya, *Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time*, 40.

<sup>209</sup> Ginzburg discusses these concerns in the context of Hegel’s reception and other influences, *On Psychological Prose*, pp. 27-58. For the larger context of Hegel’s thought in which such concerns circulated, see Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

<sup>210</sup> Redding, Paul. “The Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: The Dialectic of Lord and Bondsman in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. by Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 106.

another.<sup>211</sup> It begins with an encounter that creates “a kind of scandal: how did I get over there?”<sup>212</sup> The question emerges from the recognition that at least one other conscious being exists in the world. The self must grapple with “this other that is me and not me.”<sup>213</sup> By most accounts, the identity of the two consciousnesses is the basis for recognition, a requirement for the freedom of both. Yet the interaction also leads to a false inequality and this produces, in turn, the identities of the Lord and the Bondsman. Dramatized as a social scenario, scandals such as these describe the *Phenomenology* as a whole, which is based in shocks to common-sense and deconstructions of apparent unities into relationalities. Sociality thus bleeds into every corner of consciousness, though it may also be said that reflections on consciousness are lodged in the social sphere.

The influence of Rousseau’s *Discourse on Inequality* (1755) is present in Hegel’s Lord and Bondsman passage, the two works constituting influential reflections on the social and cultural ramifications of slave societies in the nineteenth century.<sup>214</sup> In *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau elaborates his notion of a noble savage, a pre-modern social form that is purified of the trappings of civilization.<sup>215</sup> The status of the Bondsman in Hegel (its connection to Rousseau’s image) is the subject of ongoing debate, suffice it to mention Catherine Malabou’s assessment of three interpretations on the issue by Alexander Kojève, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler.<sup>216</sup> Scholars are still considering the extent and the nature of Hegel’s Bondsman’s nearness to labor and the natural world, which exposes him to the truth of his own objectivity and places him closest to the union of subject-object.

What interests me about this parable in connection with Tolstoy’s novelistic subject is the notion of life that emerges within it as a medium for self-consciousness. Jean Hippolite writes that every stage of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* requires a new correlative objectivity against which consciousness posits itself.<sup>217</sup> In the stage of self-consciousness which is inaugurated by the Lord and Bondsman scenario, this objectivity is life. “Life in general is genuinely the other of self-consciousness.”<sup>218</sup> When self-consciousness comes into existence, it becomes aware of itself as something different from what it senses, perceives, and understands. Such difference is empty of content. Self-consciousness nevertheless maintains itself here: ‘I’ participate in life and yet ‘I’ differ from it.

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<sup>211</sup> John O’Neill thus describes the work as a “developmental phenomenology of mind *and* society.” “Introduction: A Dialectical Genealogy of Self, Society, and Culture in and after Hegel,” in *Hegel’s Dialectic of Desire and Recognition: Texts and Commentary*, ed. by John O’Neill (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 4.

<sup>212</sup> Butler, Judith and Catherine Malabou, “You Be My Body for Me: Body, Shape, and Plasticity in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*,” in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. by Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur. (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 625. Butler’s more recent discussion of the parable builds on her earlier book, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> See Judith Schklar, “Self-Sufficient Man: Dominion and Bondage,” in *Hegel’s Dialectic of Desire and Recognition: Texts and Commentary*, ed. by John O’Neill (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp.289-303. Paperno, *Who, What Am I?*, p. 108.

<sup>215</sup> For the influence of Rousseau on Tolstoy, see Orwin, *Tolstoy’s Art and Thought*, 31-6.

<sup>216</sup> Butler and Malabou, “You Be My Body for Me,” pp. 615-20.

<sup>217</sup> Hippolite, Jean. “Self-Consciousness and Life: The Independence of Self-Consciousness,” in *Hegel’s Dialectic of Desire and Recognition: Texts and Commentary*, ed. by John O’Neill (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 71.

<sup>218</sup> *ibid.*, p. 72.

This difference is established in the Lord/Bondsman encounter as follows. Prior to attaining consciousness, two beings are “submerged in life,” that is, inert objects in the sensuous world.<sup>219</sup> When I recognize that the other possesses consciousness, I and the other “emerge from life.”<sup>220</sup> As a result, we come to know ourselves as object and subject, not only recognizing each other as conscious but also understanding that we are seen by the other as objects, indeed that we *are* objects. Two beings possess what can only belong to one: I = I. Here is where desire enters the picture as the means by which self-consciousness “gathers itself up” after the scandal of initial recognition. I realize that I am a subject but I also understand (at least for a moment) that subjectivity is a state of dependency.<sup>221</sup> It is this second point that is troublesome. When I desire, I assert myself against the truth of this dependency. “Self-consciousness is desire, but what it desires, although it does not yet know this explicitly, is itself.”<sup>222</sup> By positioning myself as subject in relation to others, what I really want from them is to establish myself as I = I.

At stake in this encounter is the identity of self-consciousness as singulative negation: the only thing which is not all other things. Thus begins a battle for the exclusive right to behold the other. The Lord comes into being as the apparent victor of this battle by valuing himself above his life. Malabou describes Lordship as a conceptual name for detachment, or the achievement of I = I: “not attached to any *specific* existence ... not attached to life.”<sup>223</sup> Bondage, on the other hand, is the name for attachment. It is generally accepted that the roles described in this passage of the *Phenomenology* are not meant as essentializing definitions or justifications of slavery, despite the provocative sections about the Bondsman’s knowledge of the truth of consciousness gained through labor and the awareness of his own finitude. The Bondsman is still a subject, and it is only by embracing this fact, which is obscured by his social role, that he attains to the truth of his existence. Similarly, the Lord is an object but does not know it, distancing him still further from the truth of his existence than the Bondsman.

The Lord is one who cannot recognize in the Bondsman a person in whom independent thought takes place and therefore has no inkling that he is also merely a thing to the Bondsman who thinks him. He misses, fears, and longs for this crucial aspect of himself. According to a number of recent readings, the Lord needs the Bondsman to be excessively attached to life. Butler, for example, describes this “act of delegation” as an imperative: you be my body for me.<sup>224</sup> For most commentators, the problem with the Lord’s position is, relatedly, the very nature of his desire. Desiring his own image, the Lord ultimately desires integration: not just self, but life.<sup>225</sup> The notion of life that potentiates in the Lord and Bondsman encounter is linked to social existence: not just others, but institutions: “As much as the ‘I’ is threatened by negation—or threatens the other with negation—so it is clear that the life of the one is dependent on the life of the other. This interdependency becomes a new way of conceiving of life as sociality.”<sup>226</sup> Such a conception augurs the achievement of recognition, a need outlined in the Lord and Bondsman encounter but not fulfilled by it. Instead, the Lord desires life yet marks himself apart from it.

In Tolstoy’s writing, I suggest that these terms illuminate a negative value of life as the Lord might continue to perceive it, that is, as mere life. In this respect, life is only that emptiness

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<sup>219</sup> Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 113.

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> Hippolite, “Self-Consciousness and Life,” p. 70.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*, 71.

<sup>223</sup> Butler and Malabou, “You Be My Body for Me,” p. 612.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*, p. 611.

<sup>225</sup> Redding, “The Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness,” p. 105. Redding explains: “Part of recognition is that not just self, but life is essential.”

<sup>226</sup> Butler and Malabou, “You Be My Body for Me,” p. 630.

which obtains in the conventions of high society and in the blind submission of the peasantry – themes depicted throughout Tolstoy’s writing. It is, in part, the body which the Lord overcomes. However, life also emerges in Tolstoy’s writing as a subject-object union which circumvents society and its determinations. In a footnote in *The Hegel Variations*, Jameson describes Hegel’s “pre-Darwinian version of Life” as “the syllogism, I and not-I,” noting that “we might give Hegel credit for the first timid step in the direction of that vitalism which, a mighty stream from Nietzsche and Tolstoy ... has been so energizing a worldview ... in contemporary thought.”<sup>227</sup> In making this connection, Jameson suggests that Tolstoy expresses a notion of life from the *Phenomenology* in its metaphysical (or at any rate integrative) sense. However, given Tolstoy’s rejection of social institutions (what many commentators understand as part of Hegel’s notion of this union), we can distinguish the vitalism that presents itself in Tolstoy’s writing in a particular way. I describe mere life in Tolstoy’s work as that form of union which is connected to entanglement in social bonds, including institutions as well as other people. Life describes that union that obtains within the self, apart from others as well as institutions.

What is so striking about the Lord and Bondsman section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which consists of only several pages, is its reception in twentieth- and twenty-first century thought. Scholars point out that Hegel intended the *Phenomenology* as a “propaedeutic,” or a preparation for the task of philosophy.<sup>228</sup> By taking readers on a journey of their own experience of consciousness, Hegel meant to rid readers of the false division between subject (individual thinker) and object (what is being thought). As Paul Redding explains, Hegel attempts to achieve this goal “not by offering arguments, but by appealing to the experience of consciousness.”<sup>229</sup>

More than the alternatives to the subject/object divide offered by Hegel (such as “collective thinking” from the *Philosophy of Right*), this narrative of experience is what continues to shape literary criticism and theory, including studies which build on the work of Bakhtin and Lukács and, through them, influential studies of the novel. Galin Tihanov uses the metaphor of Master and Slave to describe the major concerns of Bakhtin and Lukács: “the shifting relations between subject and object, author and hero, culture and civilization, mastery of the outer world and inner enslavement suffered in the process.”<sup>230</sup>

I build on the sense that the preoccupations of the novel are illuminated by an intellectual history in which Hegel’s parable plays a major role. Considering the conditions of serfdom in which Tolstoy wrote and the themes related to those conditions which he explored, I suggest that Hegel’s parable illuminates, in particular, the narrative dynamics in Tolstoy’s prose across his works. The major difference between the philosopher and the writer is itself illuminating: Tolstoy thematizes life in a manner that resonates with Hegel’s exposition but separates it from social existence. The connection posited between desire and life in Hegel’s account (categories which are, it should be said, drawn into focus by his twentieth-century commentators) is illuminating in relation to the tensions that emerge in the themes of Tolstoy’s work, represented in the scene from “Utro pomesheika” with which I began. Desire is the expression of the Lord, the attempt to assert I = I, but it is also the expression of the Lord’s conflict. This conflict becomes rich material for the novel as a genre of interiority. To draw a simple distinction, Hegel describes the movement of two consciousnesses as an experience; Tolstoy’s narrative

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<sup>227</sup> Jameson, *The Hegel Variations*, p. 2.

<sup>228</sup> Redding, Paul, “Hegel” in *The Oxford Handbook to German Philosophy in the Nineteenth-Century*, ed. by Michael N. Forster and Kristin Gjesdal (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 49.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>230</sup> Galin Tihanov, *The Master and the Slave: Lukács, Bakhtin, and the Ideas of Their Time* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 294.

materializes that movement in a manner that is similar to themes explored by Hegel and strikingly different from Hegel's conclusions.

In contrast to Hegel's parable but illuminated by it, the image of the peasant for Tolstoy configures society beyond society, or a union of self-and other within the self. Throughout Tolstoy's writing, we shall see, peasants are positioned at once beyond social structure and at its ideological core. In stark contrast to Hegel, then, life in their image is weaponized to supersede sociality. In "Utro pomeschika," peasants mark the limits of desire which returns an ambitious youth to normalcy with his individuality intact. However, the aspect of life (its conventionality and sociality) which Tolstoy so often differentiates from the peasantry is also encountered among them. In "Utro pomeschika" and *Anna Karenina*, "false routine, vice, suspicion, helplessness" [ложная рутина, порок, недоверие, беспомощность] is a reflection of the peasantry, high society, and existence as such (4:166/380). Nevertheless, Tolstoy projects a sense of stability onto the element that threatens it: his first landowner hero's encounter with "false routine" in the peasant village. Nekhliudov's engagement with his serfs will plant the idea, impossible to eradicate, of self-consciousness as well as its attachment to the social world that shapes it.

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Against this background, it is no surprise that Nekhliudov's desire for recognition by his serfs (he dreams of their gratitude) is about establishing himself as a subject. The failure to find accord with "this simple, unperverted people" completes his *Bildung* by demarcating a fundamental boundary: he is 'I' and his serfs are not. Franco Moretti describes youth as a symbol of modernity in a manner that suggests a correlation between youth and desire: youth enables "an uncertain exploration of social space," posing challenges to the social order before it finds reconciliation with that order through experiences.<sup>231</sup> Appearing as an epithet throughout the work, youth shapes Nekhliudov's character, yet this character's *Bildung* differs from the typical process of normalization whereby the young person internalizes a contradiction of self and world by making the world's laws into his desires and its structure into his intimate sphere: "I desire to do what in any case I should have done."<sup>232</sup> In a sense, when Nekhliudov fails to establish a landowner's life, he learns what others knew all along and becomes socialized into their expectations. We do not know whether he will return to service in the capitals to join the ranks of typical Russian nobles, but we do know that he recognizes the impossibility of his project. As Lina Steiner has argued, Tolstoy conceptualizes "formation (*obrazovanie*) [as] including freedom rather than promoting conformity."<sup>233</sup> In the first of several pedagogical treatises written at this time, Tolstoy echoes this statement in suggestive terms: "school ought to answer to life."<sup>234</sup> Here, he uses "life" interchangeably with "peasantry." In the peasant's image, he reconstitutes a social form as a natural one, "free" and unacculturated, at least in certain ways.

As scholars note, rejecting institutions is a theme that extends across Tolstoy's work: "Nothing could be more consistent than his intolerance for all manifestations of man-made

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<sup>231</sup> Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, trans. by Albert Sbragia (London/New York: Verso, 2000), p. 4

<sup>232</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>233</sup> Steiner, Lina. *For Humanity's Sake: The Bildungsroman in Russian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. 100. Thus, when he embarks on his first attempt to establish schools for peasants shortly after beginning work on *Roman pomeschika*, he defines his conception of education as

"unfettered self-development

<sup>234</sup> *ibid.*



civilization.”<sup>235</sup> Imagined in terms of Rousseau’s noble savage, serfs “are not in fact wicked because they do not know what it is to be good. For it is neither the development of their intellect nor the restraint of the law that stops them from doing evil, but the serenity of passion and ignorance of vice.”<sup>236</sup> Across Tolstoy’s novels, however, peasant characters are often paragons of religious belief and uphold such fundamental conventions as marriage. Unlike the noble savage, then, they know very well what it is to be good. Yet by naturalizing social laws in the peasant’s image, Tolstoy is able to isolate sociality as a something which can be controlled and internalized.<sup>237</sup>

In his eventual failure to realize his fantasy of mutual collaboration with his serfs, Nekhliudov emerges as a subject more coherent than before, recusing himself from the site of interaction in which he becomes divided from himself. In the end, Nekhliudov emerges as a writer. With this gesture, the elements of the Tolstoyan novel are established: a writer masters the forces of life, and a subject defines himself in opposition to them. Paradoxically, it is in this division that life itself emerges, a totality more complete than society. In the first scene of “Utro pomeshchika,” Nekhliudov writes to his aunt about his plans, fearing his potential readers: “Не показывайте письма этого брату Васе; я боюсь его насмешек” [Don’t show my brother Vasya this letter: I am afraid of his ridicule] (4:124/332). More devastating to his project than Vasya’s contempt, however are the encounters with serfs who present him with formal problems. In both senses, he faces the problems of the novelist as much as those of its subject.

One such formal problem is illustrated by the serf Davydka, who is indeterminate in his visage from idleness; he is bloated from sleep. Formal excess parallels social excess in Davydka’s failure to work. Nekhliudov first impresses obedience upon Davydka in the terms of a moral logic from which he exempts himself: “меньше всех работал, а больше всех господского хлеба просишь. За что же тебе давать, а другим нет? <...> Надо, братец, трудиться, а это дурно — слышишь, Давыд?” [you work least but ask for your master’s grain more than anyone <...> One must work, my friend. This sort of thing is wrong. Do you hear me, David?] (4:149/360-1). The question, of course, is rhetorical. Davydka is not expected to respond beyond acquiescing. Several options occur to Nekhliudov: he could exile Davydka, conscript him into the military or he take him in as a domestic servant, thus “reforming him by kindness” (4:152/367).

In the conclusion of “Utro pomeshchika,” strikingly different from the rest of the work, the formal problem of Davydka is resolved in a different way. Nekhliudov sits at a piano and begins to weave the impressions from his day into an artistic vision set to a rhythm. In these terms, he appears to become a writer:

То представляется ему пухлая фигура Давыдки Белого, испуганно мигающего белыми ресницами при виде черного жилистого кулака своей матери, его круглая

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<sup>235</sup> Ernest J. Simmons, *Tolstoy* (London/Boston: Routledge, 1973), p. 298.

<sup>236</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men” in *The Essential Writings of Rousseau*, trans. by Peter Constantine (New York: Modern Library, 2013), p. 39.

<sup>237</sup> Discourses of nationalism establish the peasant as the bearer of normativity whereas political shifts produced the peasant as in need of moral reform. Thus, Nekhliudov finds purpose and legitimacy in the project to “develop their morality, to make them love the right...” [развить их нравственность, заставить полюбить добро] (4:165/379).

спина и огромные руки, покрытые белыми волосами, одним терпением и преданностью судьбе отвечающие на истязания и лишения (4:169).”<sup>238</sup>

The particle *to* [now] introduces a series of impressions which pass through Nekhliudov’s memory as if unwilling. The threatening fist of Davydka’s mother, raised on behalf of the Lord’s interests, is now contemplated from a distance. From this perspective, Davydka’s unruliness is transformed into patience and devotion.

From reflecting on Davydka, Nekhliudov begins fantasizing about another serf, Ilya. Memories give way to full-blown imagination as Nekhliudov envisions Ilya driving across the countryside carting goods, precisely the activity that Nekhliudov, as landowner, had forbidden. This fantasy gains momentum as its own narrative when Nekhliudov imagines Ilya awakening to harness the horses and setting off down the road. When this narrative-in-miniature culminates, Nekhliudov reemerges from his revelry to appraise his creation: “«Славно!» — шепчет себе Нехлюдов; и мысль: зачем он не Илюшка — тоже приходит ему” [‘Splendid!’ Nekhliudov whispered to himself, and the thought came to him: ‘Why am I not Ilya?’] (4:171/385). In this final line, Nekhliudov has uncovered an approach to identity which is central to the novelistic subject: to ask “who am I?” is to ask “who am I not?” Despite the third-person narration in this final line (“why was he not Ilya”) Nekhliudov’s interiority bursts through as a compression of external judgment on his own split self.

Behind this question “Why am I not Ilya?” lies another which is relevant to the writer himself: “why am I not what I made?” Nekhliudov initially mimics Tolstoy’s project to “write something useful” by devoting himself to estate management, and he also ends where Tolstoy begins in the early ‘50s, that is, as a novelist. In his transition from practical projects to narrative, Tolstoy serves as a perfect embodiment of Lukács’s figuration of the novelist in the *Theory of the Novel*, in which, critics argue, narration itself is the most fundamental seeker: “the novelist, in telling the story of failure, succeeds; his creation stands as the momentary reconciliation of matter and spirit.”<sup>239</sup> Maire Kurrik’s summation of *Theory of the Novel*, for example, tracks strikingly close to the process which Tolstoy (and Nekhliudov) undergo in their failure to write (and embody) a *Roman pomeshchika*:

The novelist interprets because life without meaning is intolerable but because the novel must also imitate, and because human consciousness never loses its desire for the presence of a real object, an actual, external other, the novelist must also bring the meaningless and inessential exterior into his form. ... In the novelist’s search for meaning, he might be led astray by succumbing to outright dogmatism or moralizing. ... The novelist is always warring against the conditions that make him a novelist.<sup>240</sup>

Understanding mere life as a necessary force which gives shape to a subject, the Lukacsian novelist insists on a subject-object division even as he attempts to dissolve it. As much as this division applies to novelistic characters, it also applies to the conditions of writing them. Pulled in by the desire for life, the novelist balances reflection with the circumstances which act as a

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<sup>238</sup> [Now it was the plump figure of White David responding to torment and privation with patience and submission: he saw his round shoulders, his immense hands covered with white hair, and his white lashes fluttering timidly at the sight of his mother’s brown sinewy fist] (383)

<sup>239</sup> Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 173.

<sup>240</sup> Maire Kurrik, “The Novel’s Subjectivity: Georg Lukács’s Theory of the Novel,” *Salmagundi*, vol. 28 (1975), pp. 107; 112.

“bedrock” that gives it shape. Whereas Tolstoy begins with the desire to exceed fiction with something “useful” (one might say, social), he ends by balancing dogmatism with concrete exposition, “the presence of a real object.” This endpoint is more intensely social yet less immediately so than the landowner’s project. It suggests a Hegelian view of the subject as I and not-I yet captures that merger in a distant vision. Such a vision can be imagined, but it cannot be real.

Lukács’s own words make explicit the stakes of the Hegelian sense of life which he applies to the novelist’s process that is emblemized at the conclusion of “Utro pomeschchika.”<sup>241</sup> He describes the context of the modern novel as one in which the individual carries exclusive value, not as a bearer of transcendent meaning, but only as himself. The transformation of “life” into literature suggest their interrelationship in Hegelian terms:

... a man can become the hero, the central figure of a literary work, because he has the inner possibility of experiencing life as a literary creator <...> Life becomes a work of literature; but, as a result, man becomes the author his own life and at the same time the observer of that life as a created work of art.<sup>242</sup>

Here, literature assumes the role of life as an internally created vision which the individual bears within himself. Although Lukács ascribes this view to the disillusioned romantic, he also writes of Tolstoy that his romantic view of nature (linked to “the world of the peasant”) was “romantic for reasons of form.”<sup>243</sup> According to Lukács, the romantic view supplies for Tolstoy’s novels the necessary opposition to subjectivity. “An essential life” hovers around the edges of Tolstoy’s novels and is contained in “central romantic experiences,” from epiphanies like Nekhliudov’s May morning to those on the battlefield in *Voyna i mir*. This “essential life” is also expressed for Lukács in Tolstoy’s “secondary characters,” peasants who “[cannot] be defined in artistic terms except in reference to others.”<sup>244</sup> Within literature, fleeting visions as well as peasant characters inscribe a vision which literature itself is also tasked to bear: the union of subject and object.

In the final vision of “Utro pomeschchika,” serfs are no less desired than they were at its beginning. Ilya strikes a virile figure beside his strong-limbed, sweating horses. Seeking a reflection of himself, Nekhliudov uncovers what he truly wants: union. Yet he holds that union at a distance as the artist holds his. In Nekhliudov’s fantasy, Ilya crosses himself some thirty times in prayer before falling asleep and dreaming of a religious pilgrimage. Subject and object thus take the form of self and God rather than self and other, an outcome Paperno finds in “Khozianin i rabotnik.”<sup>245</sup> In this way, Tolstoy layers another imperative into the imperative of the Lord and Bondsman scenario. Ilya subjects himself to God so that Nekhliudov need not. The serf is his body *and* his soul, at least that part of his soul which is not his. For protection against even God’s objectifying gaze, Tolstoy has us look to the serf who does not see. Only through him do we access the dream of being seen from the position of the seer. In this vision, Nekhliudov understands his inevitable failure of the Bildungsroman project in his own way: he will leave the estate and create the image of a union which he projects back upon it. Master and Serf are united within the memory of what the landowner’s life could have been: not laziness and disobedience,

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<sup>241</sup> Tihanov describes the influence of a trend in thought, *Lebensphilosophie*, on Lukács that further illuminates his usage of the term life. *The Master and The Slave*, pp. 112-116.

<sup>242</sup> Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, pp. 117-8.

<sup>243</sup> *ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>244</sup> *ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>245</sup> Paperno, *Who, What Am I?*, pp. 100-11.

but patience and devotion. That memory becomes a fantasy, maintained in the self-conscious creation of a narrative drawn from life but separate from it.

Nekhliudov's vision of Ilya negotiates a space between the threats posed by the gaze of the serfs traced in the bulk of the work (to which I shall soon turn) and his aunt's response to his letter, which echoes the lesson Tolstoy originally intended for the *Roman pomeschchika*. She writes:

1) Я должна сказать тебе, что мы чувствуем свое призвание только тогда, когда уж раз ошибемся в нем; 2) что легче сделать собственное счастье, чем счастье других, и 3) что для того, чтоб быть добрым хозяином, нужно быть холодным и строгим человеком, чем ты едва ли когда-нибудь будешь, хотя и стараешься притворяться таким. <...> Мне уже под пятьдесят лет, и я много знавала достойных людей, но никогда не слыхивала, чтоб молодой человек с именем и способностями, под предлогом делать добро, зарылся в деревне (4:124).<sup>246</sup>

In contrast to Nekhliudov's fantasy of Ilya, the law of experience ultimately amounts to little more than a lack of imagination: "I've never heard of such a thing." From this perspective, Nekhliudov began with a single option, that is, to be who he always was. Beyond such inevitability there is only the desire to resist it, and this is a crucial distinction. Nekhliudov's inner life is deemed unrealizable but is nevertheless acknowledged by his aunt, who "learns nothing from [his] plans but the quality of [his] heart." Readers, too, need only know of this quality. Shklovsky quips that in "Utro pomeschchika," the hero "acts as though nothing can happen without him but can do nothing."<sup>247</sup> In a sense, the contraction of the world into the character's vision is precisely the point. That world now appears only when the hero gazes at it; Nekhliudov can do nothing, but visionary distance makes him into the perfect foundation for a novel.

I have thus far defined the novel in reference to its focus on the subject, understood in terms of the effort to "differentiate one's own being from others."<sup>248</sup> Scholars locate such a focus in historical circumstances that bring together the belief that the individual determines his/her own fate even as he/she is subject to social, biological, and historical conditions. In one scholar's definition, the subject is "a pinpoint of consciousness, one's own perspective or stance on the world ... yet historical and social forces exemplify themselves through this stance."<sup>249</sup> Such tensions are explored in novel studies as a double imperative to give form to both the individual and his/her determinations.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> [I must tell you: first, that we feel our vocation only after we have once mistaken it: secondly, that it is easier to make oneself happy than others, and thirdly, that to be a good landlord one must be a cold and austere man, which you will scarcely be, though you may try to make believe that you are. <...> I am getting on for fifty and have known many fine men but have never heard of a young man of a good family and ability burying himself in the country in order to do good] (332).

<sup>247</sup> Shklovsky, *Lev Tolstoy*, p. 62.

<sup>248</sup> Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, "Characters, Persons, Selves, Individuals," in *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, ed. by Michael McKeon (Boston, MA: John Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 548.

<sup>249</sup> *ibid.*, p. 547.

<sup>250</sup> Gallagher explores the "double-imperative" of type and individual in "The Rise of Fictionality," p. 337, and Moretti explores the socialization/individualism tension in *The Way of the World*, p. 15.

Locating this definition of the subject across influential studies of the novel, Hale describes the device of point of view as “consciousness literally contained in a point.”<sup>251</sup> In her account, point of view is a privileged locus for theories which, like Lukács’s, unite the concerns of social realities and literary form. *Theory of the Novel*, for example, does not address specific narrative features but elaborates concepts that are manifested in artistic representation. Following a combination of formal and historical as well as philosophical approaches, the novel can thus be defined as a representational system distinguished by certain stylistic innovations (techniques of point of view chief among them) and actively engaged in the creation of historical constructs. The association between point of view and subjectivity that builds on this broader intersection has a long history. Michael McKeon describes point of view as a tool to “to carve out a space of subjective interiority.”<sup>252</sup>

Understood as a narrative process of internalization, point of view shows how narrative information is filtered through character perspectives. The process, according to most accounts, “reaches its apogee in free indirect discourse,” where a character’s thoughts and feelings are expressed without direct attribution.<sup>253</sup> Here, a character appears as an object (he or she) as well as a subject (I). In the final line of “Utro pomeschchika,” for example (“why was he not Ilya”), the pronoun “he” might easily be replaced by “I,” and the difference between external observation and internal experience is blurred. For this reason, free indirect discourse is, as Ann Banfield writes, “the literary form which exhibits the very structure of modern thought ... engender[ing] the subject/object split.”<sup>254</sup> In the remainder of this section, I describe the emergence of novelistic subjectivity from within the Master and Serf encounter and suggest how it encodes a union very different from the union (possessed by the writer) with which the story ends.

“Utro pomeschchika” marks an important shift in the development of Tolstoy’s narration in a number of ways. First, there are no intrusions by a third-person narrator, common to Tolstoy’s writing during the early ‘50s. For example, there are no digressions which elaborate on judgments of Nekhliudov in the manner of the following example from *Kazaki* [The Cossacks] (1852): “Но Оленин слишком сильно сознавал в себе присутствие этого всемогущего бога молодости, эту способность превратиться в одно желание, в одну мысль, способность захотеть и сделать, способность броситься головой вниз в бездонную пропасть, не зная за что, не зная зачем (4:12).”<sup>255</sup> Here, the description of youth, already colored with a certain degree of emotion as “an all-powerful God,” effects a clear break in the narrative, elaborated into abstraction with the repetition of “this capacity” [etu sposobnost’]. Such elaboration is a rare occurrence in “Utro pomeschchika,” which also departs from the autobiographical narrative forms with which Tolstoy was experimenting in works such as *Detstvo*. In Andrew Wachtel’s analysis, the first-person narration in *Detstvo* insists on the distance between the ‘I’ of the past and the ‘I’

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<sup>251</sup> Hale, “Form and Function: An Introduction,” *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, 24.

<sup>252</sup> Michael McKeon, “Introduction: Subjectivity, Character, Development,” in *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, ed. by Michael McKeon (Boston, MA: John Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 485.

<sup>253</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> Ann Banfield, *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1982), p. 254.

<sup>255</sup> [But Olenin was too strongly conscious of that presence of that all-powerful God of Youth—of that capacity to be entirely transformed into an aspiration or idea—the capacity to wish and to do—to throw oneself headlong into a bottomless abyss without knowing why or wherefore.] Trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude, *Great Works of Leo Tolstoy* (New York: Harper, 1967), p. 90.

of narration.<sup>256</sup> In “Utro pomeshchika,” by contrast, the narrator tracks close to his object, Nekhliudov, and abstains from external judgments or hindsight. The exchange of letters between Nekhliudov and his aunt, framed by minimal commentary, suggest the narrative’s orientation within the mind of the characters. With these devices, the narrator strives to present subjectivity in the words and actions of the subject itself.

When Nekhliudov first enters the village with a list of requests from peasants, a crowd of church-goers immediately scatter. “Bowing low to the master and stepping out of his way,” peasants give shape to this burgeoning subjectivity [низко кланяясь барину и обходя его] (4:126/334). This initial dynamic of deference gives way to a more problematic series of exchanges manifested in narrative perspective. The narrator’s relationship to Nekhliudov, typically confined to external observation, penetrates beyond these observations to describe the emergence of shame, a hallmark of his disappointing morning:

... молодой помещик понял, что значила для Чуриса и его жены разваливающаяся избенка, обвалившийся колодезь с грязной лужей, гниющие хлебушки, сарайчики и треснувшие ветлы, видневшиеся перед кривым оконцем. Ему стало что-то тяжело, грустно и чего-то совестно (4:133/342).<sup>257</sup>

Nekhliudov’s unspoken thoughts permeate the details of this scene, and this occurs in part because the source of Nekhliudov’s shame (his lack of awareness) appears strange to him. Shame could be observed in such markers as blushing, but Nekhliudov’s failure to locate its source could not. It is the confusion between self and other that opens a new depth of inner life.

In this instance, as Nekhliudov realizes the existence of other perspectives, he becomes an object as well as a subject. Inside the serfs’ hovel, he imagines their perspective from within it. Prior to this realization, he sits down on a bench and makes himself at home before he realizes that it is one, absorbed in himself as within an all-encompassing frame. He argues with Churis, alternating between vexation and melancholy, and is emphatically not ashamed, “looking straight at Churis” [всматриваясь в лицо Чурисенка] (4:130/338). It is only when Churis calls him ‘master’ and Churis’s wife hears this word as a call to throw herself at his feet and implore him as “benefactor, our father and mother” that he suddenly sees himself as the other see him:

Не погуби, кормилец! Ты наш отец, ты наша мать! Куда нам селиться? Мы люди старые, одинокие. Как бог, так и ты...— завопила она. Нехлюдов вскочил с лавки и хотел поднять старуху, но она с каким-то сладострастьем отчаяния билась головой о земляной пол и отталкивала руку барина (4:132-3).<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Andrew Wachtel, *The Battle for Childhood: Creation of a Russian Myth* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 20-1.

<sup>257</sup> [the young landowner realized for the first time what the tumble-down hovel, the broken-down well with the muddy puddle, the rotting sheds and the outhouse, and the broken willows which he saw through the crooked window, meant to Churis and his wife. He felt depressed, sad, and without knowing why, ashamed]

<sup>258</sup> [‘Don’t ruin us, benefactor! You are like father and mother to us! How could we move? We are old, lonely people. As God, so you...’ and she began her lamentations again. Nekhliudov jumped up from the bench to raise the old woman, but she beat her head on the earthen floor in a kind of passionate despair and pushed his hand away] (341).

In this moment, Nekhliudov becomes the opposite of what he usually takes himself to be: he is helpless (she shoves his hand away), a parent who is really a child, a benefactor who delivers only harm, and a god who is unable to control or understand his world.

Dorrit Cohn suggests that a lack of clarity in a character's feelings, particularly the origin of those feelings, often marks the emergence of novelistic interiority. She argues that when the non-verbal nature of inner experiences is emphasized, an effort is being made to show that they are relayed by a third-person narrator because they are unable to be communicated by the character himself.<sup>259</sup> Such experiences seem to exceed language, and thus narrators intercede to give language to the unspeakable. In Cohn's account, unspeakability is often indexed by erotic feelings, a suggestive correlation to desire (in a broad sense) that applies to Nekhliudov's relationship to his serfs in "Utro pomeschika." Cohn suggests that in the absence of an intrusive narrator, the unspoken thoughts of characters emerge because they do not require "translation into the social realm."<sup>260</sup> However, social meaning is also revealed in the very structure of Nekhliudov's identity, and it is precisely this structure that he finds himself unable to verbalize.

As Nekhliudov realizes the existence of another, he also realizes that life persists beyond him and takes shapes different from his own:

Нехлюдов уже давно знал, не по слухам, не на веру к словам других, а на деле, всю ту крайнюю степень бедности, в которой находились его крестьяне; но вся действительность эта была так несообразна со всем воспитанием его, складом ума и образом жизни, что он против воли забывал истину... (4:134).<sup>261</sup>

Even observation may not afford a genuine encounter with the existence of others, and "reality" thus becomes a matter of interiority, perspective, and the insights developed in their unfolding. By recognizing this elusive existence, Nekhliudov is pulled onto the plane of narration where he also recognizes his typical state of oblivion as a character. For a time, he maintains this wider perspective on himself that draws on the perspective of the other. This heightened self-awareness abates when Nekhliudov reenters conversation with Churis and uses "sentimental expressions" to persuade him (4:133/342). In this ironized move, Nekhliudov's distinction from the narrator is redrawn. By the end of the scene, Nekhliudov's appears to us once more not as a master (as Churis's wife had insisted), but as "a simple-hearted young man." Such is the nature of the subject: neither completely a landowner nor completely a sentimentalist, but rather an individual who attempts to embody and find comfort in any number of identities. If he has any definitive type, it is youth: the very emblem of individuality. From the scandal of self-division, a coherent subject is thus reestablished.

What is subdued by the narrator's transformation of Nekhliudov from master to young man is the more intensely ironic gaze of Churis, who is described as maintaining a "certain ironical indifference to his surroundings" [насмешливое равнодушие ко всему окружающему] (4:127/335-6). Churis's indifference, interpreted as an awareness of his own objectivity, is projected onto Nekhliudov, who demands to be recognized as a subject. When Nekhliudov enters Churis's yard, Churis keeps his back turned for some time and such manifest disregard finds further expression in his dilapidated surroundings: half-rotten wood, sloping

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<sup>259</sup> Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Representing Consciousness* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 48.

<sup>260</sup> *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>261</sup> [Nekhliudov had long known, not by hearsay or by trusting to other people's words, but by personal observation, the extreme poverty in which his serfs lived; but that reality was in such contrast to his whole upbringing, his bent of mind and the course of his life, that he involuntarily kept forgetting it...] (343-4).

sides, and half-torn shutters. Life's shapelessness antagonizes the subject who seeks to establish himself as its master, and Churis's implied perspective, Nekhliudov is no different from the shapelessness he exerts himself against. Once intimated, the effects of his ironic perspective threaten the very form of Nekhliudov's character. For this reason, effects of irony are redirected at Churis:

Он [Nekhliudov] почувствовал даже некоторую злобу на мужика, сердито пожал плечами и нахмурился; но вид нищеты, окружавшей его, и среди спокойная и самодовольная наружность Чуриса превратили его досаду в какое-то грустное, безнадежное чувство (4:130).<sup>262</sup>

Although it is superseded, Churis's mocking silence lends Tolstoy's narrative a counterbalance to subjectivity and becomes a feature of his authorial stance. In particular, irony affords distance from conventionality. Central to realism's project, this function is illustrated by a scene in which Nekhliudov attempts to demonstrate his knowledge of agriculture by citing a manual, "Maison rustique," clearly an index of conventionality in its ties to elite education.<sup>263</sup> Against such conventions, the unruliness of "life" (its contrast) is set loose on Nekhliudov in the image of bees buzzing in his ear as he attempts to speak:

А вот я читал в книжке – начал Нехлюдов, отмахиваясь от пчелы, которая, забившись ему в волосе, жужжала под самым ухом – что коли вощина прямо стоит, по жердочкам, то пчела раньше роиться. Для этого делают такие улья из досок... с перекладин... — Вы не извольте махать, она хуже, сказал старичок (4:160).<sup>264</sup>

The buzzing which prevents Nekhliudov from making his point seems to demand that he listen instead. He attempts to reclaim space for himself by waving his hands yet exacerbates the stir of mere life that is overtaking him. By the end of this passage, the narrator no longer needs to describe Nekhliudov's actions, for Dutlov infers them ("don't wave, please"). Like the narrator, Dutlov regards him from a distance, but unlike the narrator, he does not listen to him.

In such scenes, serfs inscribe a place for negation and evoke the gesture of "*ne to*" [not that] which we encountered in the scene of his epiphany. For serf characters, negation appears not as a path to an answer ("this is it!") but is an end in itself. Lukács writes of irony that it "consists of giving form to what happens to the idea in real life," that is, the bedrock against which those ideas crash and transform.<sup>265</sup> This is the function of serfs in "Utro pomeshchika": to objectify ideas. When it was first published, Turgenev interpreted this work as demonstrating the

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<sup>262</sup> [He even felt a sort of animosity against Churis, and angrily shrugged his shoulders and frowned; but the sight of the wretchedness around him and Churis's quiet, self-satisfied appearance in the midst of it, changed his vexation into a melancholy feeling of hopelessness] (339).

<sup>263</sup> On "Masion Rustique," see Anna Annunziata, "Tolstoy, Rousseau, and the Russian Estate: The Search for Paradise Lost in *A Landowner's Morning*," *Tolstoy Studies Journal*, XXIII (2011), pp. 1-10.

<sup>264</sup> ['I have been reading a book,' Nekhliudov began, driving off a bee which had got into his hair and buzzed just about his ear, 'that if the combs are placed straight up, fixed to little laths, the bees swarm earlier. For this purpose, hives are made of boards with cross-pieces...' 'Please don't wave your arm about, it makes them worse,' said the old man] (373).

<sup>265</sup> Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, p. 85



impossibility of accord between master and serf “despite authentic readiness on both sides.”<sup>266</sup> For the ironist, nothing is sufficient, and nothing is without value: both sides are right, and both sides are wrong. Irony is thus close to acknowledging interdependence, hinting as it does at the inevitable demise of ideas and individuals alike. Ultimately, however, we are left with the sense that it is not for serfs to change, but rather for Nekhliudov to realize that he should not apply himself where he cannot succeed. Perfection becomes internal whereas apathy and critique are themselves subject to irony and, as Lukács puts it, the idealistic youth begins to seem right again.

In “Utro pomeschchika,” the “bedrock” of life objectifies ideals as well as the idealist, “capturing the act of striving” from an outside perspective, but not quashing it.<sup>267</sup> The subject’s striving is recast into the horizon of the writer. Only here can objectivity perform its positive role, reconfiguring mere life into life itself. In the final instance, irony belongs to the author who seeks for *something* just as much as the hero, marking a difference from only too-ironic serfs.

Contradictory as it may seem, the desire for reconciliation encompasses the certainty of its failure. From the predictable failure of the landowner’s quest to its less predictable end, life is articulated as the failure of the ideas which crash against it. Even before the final vision in “Utro pomeschchika,” this failure is not a bad thing insofar as it ensures that master and serf are locked in a bond of mutual need: the messy material of life and efforts to shape it. From this perspective, the unbridgeable distance between them is not some fault in the system, nor is it a moral failing. What seems to be desired is a deeper connection between master and serf, but is it not already the case that they are not so different in their essential objecthood? If Master and Serf find accord (if they realize themselves in each other) it follows that society constitutes the subject (even its inner most soul) and the subject constitutes society. Such a consequence is what Hegel had outlined and what Tolstoy consistently rejects.

Let me conclude this section with one last scene from “Utro pomeschchika.” We have seen how the themes of desire and life are configured in the dynamics of Master and Serf and define a false opposition between self-consciousness and its object. In this opposition, we saw two aspects of narrative develop: the novelist and the novelistic subject, that is, a writer who instantiates subject-object union but cannot participate in it, and a character who recognizes his objecthood but continuously overcomes it. Nekhliudov’s inner life emerges in the context of shame, a feeling that speaks to the desire for independent existence (a state of being seen by no one) as well as its impossibility. The source of this feeling in the scandal of the master and the serf is reimagined as the basis for a union which overcomes it. “Life” as the union of subject and object is separated from the sociality such union entails. In the end, it is assumed that the rights to an exclusive subjective existence have already been won. All that remains is to find those portals to integration that evade the truth of interdependency which, for Hegel, stares us in the face.

In a scene of encounter with the serf Yukhvanka, the consequence of Lordship is laid bare as a problem more difficult to resolve in such unions as those imagined at the end of “Utro pomeschchika.” That consequence is deceit, the very thing which drives the seeker of truth from society. In master and serf dynamics, the serf must pretend to be less of a subject than he is and serfs thus cannot help but lie to the master who sees them that way. In “Utro pomeschchika,” this deceit is also revealed as a product of the master’s own delusions.

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<sup>266</sup> G. V. Krasnov, “Zapiski okhotnika” Turgeneva i tvorcestvo Tolstogo,” in *L. N. Tolstoi: Stat’i i material*, ed. by G. V. Krasnov (Moskva: Gor’koskii gosudarstvennyi universitet im N. I. Lobachevskogo, 1973), p. 344.

<sup>267</sup> Mezhibovskaya, *Tolstoy and the Religious Culture of His Time*, pp. 49-50. Commentators note the diminished presence of irony in comparison to previous drafts. See Gudzii, “Ot romana russkogo pomeschchika k utru pomeschchika,” p. 338.

In Yukhvanka's hut, Nekhliudov sees his own stolen property, a fragmentary image of himself: "Юхванкина изба была тщательно покрыта соломой с барского гумна и срублена из свежего светло-серого осинового леса (тоже из барского заказа)" [Yukhvanka's hut was carefully thatched with straw from the threshing floor of the estate, and was built of light grey aspect timber, also from the master's forest] (4:138/348). Nekhliudov's image is thus intertwined with Yukhvanka's, a matter which is intensified in the triangulated characterization of two figures whom Nekhliudov first encounters: Yukhvanka's mother and his wife. Mother and wife are two sides of the same coin: good peasant and bad peasant; life itself and mere life; death (patience and devotion) and sexuality (vice, suspicion). The figure of the wife thus intimates the worst of high society as it appears in *Anna Karenina*, dressing in all the finery she can manage. And although Nekhliudov allies himself with the mother by pushing coins into her hand as he departs, he is not exempt from association with the wife. Nekhliudov may feel that wife and husband take from him just as they take from their mother (stealing his lumber and so on) yet he, too, issues excessive labor demands. One senses that the dual aspects of the serf as they appear in this scene—deceitful and deceived, cunning and helpless—are aspects of Nekhliudov himself.

The mirroring of master and serf is compounded by Yukhvanka's refusal to make eye contact with Nekhliudov. Such refusal fully accords with his role as a serf yet is represented here as defiance and deceit: "глаза его мгновенно обежали всю фигуру барина ... не останавливаясь ни на чем [his eyes ran rapidly over his master's whole figure ... not resting on anything] (4:140/350). As a scene of dueling vision unfolds, Nekhliudov seeks to verify through visual inspection his suspicion that Yukhvanka does not need a new horse but desires the money he would acquire through a sale. The more Nekhliudov attempts to uncover Yukhvanka's subterfuge, that is, the more he attempts to see, the less aware he becomes of himself:

Но Нехлюдов прямо с головы подошел к лошади и, вдруг ухватив ее за уши, пригнул к земле с такой силой, что меренок, который, как оказывалось, была очень смиренная мужицкая лошадка, зашатался и захрипел, стараясь вырваться. Когда Нехлюдов заметил, что совершенно напрасно было употреблять такие усилия, и взглянул на Юхванку, который не переставал улыбаться, ему пришла в голову самая обидная в его лета мысль, что Юхванка смеется над ним и мысленно считает его ребенком (4:142).<sup>268</sup>

When Nekhliudov determines from this inspection that Yukhvanka's request is illegitimate, Yukhvanka admits what "the master could not have failed to see" and nothing more. Nekhliudov thus has what he seems to want: no other perspective but his own. When Nekhliudov tearfully exclaims, "real peasants don't lie!" Yukhvanka also begins to cry, calming himself only when Nekhliudov does the same.

This dramatization of perspectives exchanged between a master and his serf uncovers their deeper desires. Yukhvanka wants money for whatever he wants it for. That is to say, he is a subject. Nekhliudov wants self-assurance (recognition) but despairs in what it means for him. No different from serfs caught in the trappings of social existence, Nekhliudov here finds no escape among them. Rather, he finds a mirror of himself. Although Nekhliudov's identity is constituted in opposition to his serfs, he has also made these characters the way they are. It is because of him

<sup>268</sup> [But Nekhliudov went up to the horse's head and suddenly seized it by the ears with such force that the gelding, which was after all a very quiet peasant horse, swayed and snorted, trying to get away. When Nekhliudov noticed that it was quite unnecessary to use such force, and looked at Yukhvanka who continued to smile, the idea – most humiliating to one of his age – occurred to him that Yukhvanka was making fun of him and regarded him as a child] (352). (Translation slightly modified.)

that they must dissemble, avoid dialogue even we asked for it, and avert their gaze even when it is demanded. Everything missing in the Bondsman is missing in the Lord.<sup>269</sup> To the novelist who denies it, society is a confused exchange of mutually constituting identities at war with each other and themselves. Although such a world is reconstituted in the novelist's imagination as a harmonious but distant interdependency, the truth of sociality which it reveals continues to haunt the themes and structure of *Anna Karenina*, where characters hover between authoring their own lives and submitting to life as to an ineluctable fate.

## II. *Anna Karenina: The Nightmare of Mere Life*

The question which ends “Utro pomeshchika” (why am I not Ilya?) finds expression in *Anna Karenina* in an obvious place: the concerns of the landowner hero, Konstantin Levin. On the verge of an existential crisis, Levin echoes the crisis of Anna, the second hero of the novel. For Levin, however, life appears meaningless in precisely the sphere where it should not: practical efforts on the estate.

Левин глядел то сквозь открытые ворота, в которых толклась и играла сухая и горькая пыль молотьбы, на освещенную горячим солнцем траву гумна и свежую солому, только что вынесенную из сарая, то на пестроголовых белогрудых ласточек, с присвистом влетающих по крышу и, трепля крыльями, останавливавшихся в просветах ворот, то на народ, копошившийся в темной и пыльной риге, и думал странные мысли. «Зачем все это делается?»—думал он (19:374-5).<sup>270</sup>

Recalling the formula “now this, now that” from the end of “Utro pomeshchika,” this passage illustrates the range of Levin's perspective; any number of details may be encompassed within it. As Levin's vision of the threshing barn expands with contemplative distance, his inner world contracts into a question: what is the point? The scene's immediacy is rendered through such details as the hovering dust particles and fluttering swallows. We are brought close to the scene before it collapses, at once riveted and detached.

The question becomes increasingly specific in its focus on peasants working in the barn: “Зачем я тут стою, заставляю их работать? Из чего они все хлопочут и стараются показать при мне свое усердие?” [Why am I standing here and making them work? ... why are they all bustling about trying to show me their zeal?]. Levin's assumption that the actions of others are meant for his appraisal indicates the centrality of his perspective: everything exists for him to see it. In this scene, Levin finds himself perplexed that this is the case and as a result, the novel itself is called into question as a subject-centered text and, along with it, the worth of he who contemplates and does not labor: “all this is being done.” Whereas Nekhliudov grasped “the laws

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<sup>269</sup> Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 117. “What really confronts him is not an independent consciousness but a dependent one. He is, therefore, not certain of *being-for-self* as the truth of himself. On the contrary, his truth is in reality the unessential consciousness and its unessential action. <...> its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be.”

<sup>270</sup> [Levin now gazed at the open doorway in which the dry and bitter dust of the threshing hovered and sparkled, at the grass of the threshing floor lit by the hot sun and the fresh straw just taken from the barn, now at the white-breasted swallows with multi-colored heads that flew peeping under the roof and, fluttering their wings, paused in the opening of the door, now at the people pottering about in the dark and dusty threshing barn, and thought strange thoughts. “Why is this all being done?” he thought] (792-3).

of life” but could not reliably enact them, Levin acts but does not know why. Without such knowledge, he is (so he thinks) as mechanically obedient as the other. Although it is the precepts of “life,” articulated in a peasant’s directive to “live for the soul,” that will save him, Levin bears witness to a lawless, more immediate, form of interdependency.

The wider perspective achieved by Levin in this scene undermines his coherence as a subject, installing a sense of emptiness in which all things participate. I have suggested that such perspective is established in master and serf relations (“why are they showing me their zeal?”) because there is no sharper formulation of the subject’s coherence, and no place more threatening to its dissolution. In *Anna Karenina*, this perspective, which is only fully understood in the context that generates it, develops to its most extreme limit in the plot of Anna. Here, that perspective establishes another version of subject-object union, one that indicates a negative inversion of the positive value of the Tolstoyan novel as mere life. As this perspective makes inroads into the narrative that would contain it, life and mere life become difficult to distinguish. It is, finally, Anna and not Levin that acquires the vision of a very different novelist, distantly aware of the oneness of all things (grounded in a common emptiness) yet knowing herself to be imbricated in them. This vision, I argue, develops on pace with the symbolic images of peasants that index the key moments of Anna’s plot. Though largely distanced from the countryside estate, Anna’s plot is nevertheless configured within the tensions of master and serf that reach far beyond that place, for these define sociality in the Tolstoyan novel as I have described it.

“Levin: The Dream of Life” explores the dynamics of point of view in Levin’s plot, arguing that these build on the developments in “Utro pomeschchika” in which shame is established as the foundation for the representation of inner life. For Levin, the countryside estate provides a cover from shame, even as it continues to provoke an awareness of the subject’s reality as both subject and object on which that shame is based. Configurations of peasant characters shift between “life itself” and “mere life” as the conflicting values that are contained in the image of the peasant. In “Anna: The Peasant Torn Asunder,” I show how a negative configuration of subject-object union characterizes Anna’s plot at a structural level, where the image of the peasant merges with the fate of Anna and is inextricable from a pivotal realization, one that seeps into the novel itself, that the subject is bound to others.

As we shift from a text written against the background of serfdom to one which was written (and set) after emancipation, allow me to reiterate, in general terms, the shifting social context. Prior to 1861, serfs could not change status or residence and were subject to the demands of landowners, who could coerce them into working manorial lands even if they needed the hours to work their own for subsistence.<sup>271</sup> With few legal protections, serfs could be forbidden from side endeavors. The reform of 1861 granted immediate personal freedom, liquidated *barshchina* labor and equivalent dues, and created a legal category of peasant distinct from serf categories (i.e., state, seignorial, and domestic servant).<sup>272</sup> However, the situation of former serfs remained onerous and dependent while the position of landowners was in many

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<sup>271</sup> Stanley L. Engerman, “Slavery, Serfdom, and Other Forms of Coerced Labour: Similarities and Differences,” in *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage*, ed. by M.L. Bush (London: Longman, 1996), p. 22. “Serfs paid their owners in cash, kind, or labor time to fulfill labor obligations, as well as to obtain the permission needed for various personal actions, such as marriage or mobility.” Payment in cash or kind differs from rent because it was contractual, but arbitrary and compulsory. Boris, Mironov, “Evolution of Servile Relations,” in *The Social History of Imperial Russia 1700-1917*, Vol. 2, trans. by Ben Eklof (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 73-75.

<sup>272</sup> Shanin, *The Awkward Class*, p. 19. “A specific peasant social and political structure with households and communes and its major units was now formalized, similarities in circumstance and way of life now being formalized by specific peasant legislation”

ways retained: “noblemen played a major role in drafting and implementing the new order, and their interests were well protected.”<sup>273</sup> For one thing, redemption payments replaced labor and dues, and though the amount of land peasants worked decreased, their work did not.<sup>274</sup> Because peasant labor was by no means limited to agriculture, views of industrial displacement in *Anna Karenina* must be contextualized. The peasantry had always denoted a “broad spectrum of unofficial statuses” and prior to industrialization, many peasants had worked in cottage industries.<sup>275</sup> Even so, the rise of factory labor forced rising numbers to migrate to cities to find other ways of supplementing their incomes.<sup>276</sup> The results are visible in *Anna Karenina*: the railroad workers who haunt Anna’s plot may well have been migrant peasants, and peasants who work for Levin and pay him redemption fees were all part of a labor force inherited from serfdom.

Changes in literary history, witnessed in Tolstoy’s own career, are also significant in this period. *Anna Karenina* further develops stylistic features of the realist novel, including a more objective form of narration (compared to that of *Voyna i mir*) and a compositional pattern based on “internal linkages.” Immersed in the contemporary concerns of the mid-’70s, *Anna Karenina* affects some readers as “life itself” while others see it as a “free and pure novel,” without lyrical, philosophical, authorial digressions.<sup>277</sup> Eikhenbaum describes a shift in Tolstoy’s compositional strategies as stemming from the need to establish structure without relying on historical events. Turning his attention to a number of literary traditions, chief among them the novel of adultery and of the family, Tolstoy seemed to embark on a work of “pure fiction” that, for the time being, was not intended to be anything else.<sup>278</sup> Between 1874-77, however, the scope of the novel expanded from the adultery plot to include social and political themes. For many commentators, the shift to such themes indicates Tolstoy’s growing preoccupation with contemporary issues, including newly established organizations of local government.

Despite his renunciation of literature in 1877 upon the completion of his “dreary, vulgar *Anna*,” Tolstoy’s novel continues to strike readers as somehow uniquely artistic, or at any rate emphatically so.<sup>279</sup> The extent of the novel’s structural coherence and the nature of its internal connections are described by Eikhenbaum and Amy Mandelker, among others, as “anti-realist,” largely for its engagement with symbols and images, with the nightmare peasant of Anna’s plot, we shall see, being chief among them.<sup>280</sup> John Bayley interprets the conflicting demands of the novel as one of adultery and one of social and political engagement as a fulfillment of Tolstoy’s

<sup>273</sup> Peter Kolchin, “Some Controversial Questions Concerns Nineteenth-Century Emancipation from Slavery and Serfdom,” in *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage*, ed. by M.L. Bush (London: Longman, 1996), p. 54.

<sup>274</sup> Stephen G. Wheatcroft, “Crises and the Condition of the Peasantry in Late Imperial Russia” in *Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia 1800-1921*, ed. by Esther Kingston-Mann and Timothy Mixer. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 101.

<sup>275</sup> Wirtschafter, Elise K. *Social Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2015), p. 100.

<sup>276</sup> Barbara Engel, *Between the Fields and the City: Women, Work, and Family in Russia, 1861-1914* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 2.

<sup>277</sup> E. G. Babaev, “Syuzhet i kompozitsiia romana “Anna Karenina,” in *Tolstoi – Khudozhnik: Sbornik statei* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, Institut mirovoi literatury, 1961), p. 150. Babaev quotes from *Russkii vestnik*, 117 (1875), p. 401. Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Russian Literature*, ed. Fredson Bowers (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), pp. 137-236.

<sup>278</sup> Eikhenbaum, *Tolstoi in the Seventies*, p. 80.

<sup>279</sup> Quoted in Paperno, *Who, What Am I?*, p. 37 (Letter from August, 1875).

<sup>280</sup> Amy Mandelker, *Framing Anna Karenina: Tolstoy, the Woman Question, and the Victorian Novel* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1993), p. 68.

persistent engagement with social questions, a fact that seems to contravene Tolstoy's evident rejection of society in other contexts: "Tolstoy needs Levin because he is a social creature and expands the novel. ... *Anna Karenina* begins with fiction and invention and is brought to its full scope by autobiography and polemic."<sup>281</sup> In Eikenbaum's reading, *Anna Karenina* stages a battle in which art, defined in terms of selection and composition, stands directly against life: "without historical events to lean upon, there was only motley, fleeting phenomena of the contemporary stream ... it had to be fixed with something."<sup>282</sup> Both interpretations suggest that the conflicts thematized in *Anna Karenina* reflect, to some extent, the process of writing it as modulating between an engagement with society and, through art, its structuration.

In the terms I have sketched throughout this chapter, the novelist supplies a vision of subject-object unity which is better imagined from afar rather than it is experienced in real life. Fiction and invention would thus appear to be supreme values for the Tolstoyan novel, providing structure where there is none, or wherever that structure is false. As Bayley's comments remind us, however, fictionality is consistently problematized in Tolstoy's own approach to his work. Indeed, as a theme in *Anna Karenina*, fiction is, we shall see, associated with nightmare images and a loss of control over oneself. At the end of this section, I suggest that Anna's plot, steeped in social convention and fatalism, offers a view of fiction to contrast the subject-oriented novel of a landowner. This view of fiction parallels the alternative version of subject-object union that I locate in Anna's plot where sociality draws the subject into itself. Bayley's comments suggest that Levin's plot, not Anna's, is more properly social but this is true only when social stands for the distant vision of the novelist. In Anna's plot, society is constituted by subject-object reversals and dominates an increasingly decentered subject. Though Levin's plot maintains the novelist's stance as it was formulated at the end of "Utro pomeschchika," Anna's plot introduces a counter-stance, one that embraces the novel's fictionality – a contrast to its celebration of "life." Anna's plot offers a vision of society as the conditions of the subject from which it cannot escape yet as we have already seen in "Utro pomeschchika," this vision haunts even the landowner's novel.

### *Levin: The Dream of Life*

Developing from the paradigm in which Nekhliudov encounters himself as subject and object, *Anna Karenina* is organized in part by the leitmotif of shame. The novel begins with Stiva Oblonsky's grapples with a sense of shame before his wife, Dolly, who has just learned of his affair. Dolly has seen Stiva as he is; this is a shock to him, for he thought his wife "none too bright" [недалекая] (18:4/2). As in "Utro pomeschchika," the third-person narrator maintains close proximity to the insights of his characters, adding little to their own perspectives. *Anna Karenina*'s narrator documents how a character's interpretation of events tracks along beside those events, sometimes preempting and sometimes trailing behind them. As Audrey Jaffe writes of omniscient narration, an objective rendering of events emerges only within the movement between different perspectives.<sup>283</sup> This movement, as we have already seen, produces shame in characters who find themselves poised between their own perspectives and that of others.

Critics sometimes read *Anna Karenina* as profoundly negative, "pervaded with discord and division." Richard Gustafson comments that "both illicit and licit couples face distance and isolation."<sup>284</sup> Indeed, the opening scene outlines the failure of mutual recognition in which the

<sup>281</sup> John Bayley, *Tolstoy and the Novel* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 202.

<sup>282</sup> Eikhenbaum, *Tolstoi in the Seventies*, p. 130.

<sup>283</sup> Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, pp. 8-16.

<sup>284</sup> Gustafson, *Resident and Stranger*, p. 46.

novel dwells: “Он [Stiva] поглядел на нее [Dolly], и злоба, выразившаяся на ее лице, испугала и удивила его. Он не понимал того, что его жалость к ней раздражала ее. Она видела в нем к себе сожаленье, но не любовь [He looked at her and the spite that showed on her face frightened and astonished him. He did not understand that his pity exasperated her. In him she saw pity for herself but no love] (18:15/12). In this instance and throughout the novel, perspectives are dismantled in the exchange of glances and pieced back together again, leaving readers with the sense that the only thing which everyone understands is being misunderstood. Such is the negative ground from which characters in *Anna Karenina* stand to emerge.

Against this backdrop, characters are also depicted “in process,” determined by a wide range of effects. Ginzburg describes the development of the psychological novel in Tolstoy as the discovery of this wide range of effects and the contradictions that range produces.<sup>285</sup> For example, a character might be impelled to act in one way based on her social conditioning yet deterred from such action based on biological needs. Just as Cohn offers the example of erotic feelings as the basis of interiority for their provocation of unspeakable feelings, Ginzburg singles out shame as indicative of this view of the subject as strewn across determinations. In such a view, certain social demands may become evident as our conditions change, provoking a sense of shame about our past: “what a person did not wish to face may suddenly become painfully active.”<sup>286</sup> Shame tells a character’s whole story, as it were, drawn from the demands of society (often contradictory in themselves) and other conflicting demands. In these accounts, the reality of a subject as conditioned by the society from which he/she is distinguished manifests shame in the texture of narrative. However much a singular subject emerges from the contradictions that shape him/her, tracing those contradictions involves returning subjectivity to the site of its construction – an ongoing project fraught with failure.

This is precisely how Levin’s plot begins when he returns to his estate in the wake of a rejected marriage proposal. He buoys himself with a vision that is reminiscent of Nekhliudov’s in “Utro pomeschika,” though his disillusionment comes much sooner. It is not the image of a woman’s body, nor married life, but landownership to which he will devote himself. In a well-known scene in which Levin enters his study with the life of a landowner in mind, he imagines that he is mocked by the object-world as by so many traces of the past. Levin and readers know that this story, the landowner’s story, has already been written.

Кабинет медленно осветился внесенной свечой. Выступили знакомые подробности: оленьи рога, полки с книгами, зеркало печи с отдушником, который давно надо было починить, отцовский диван, большой стол, на столе открытая книга, сломанная пепельница, тетрадь с его почерком. Когда он увидел все это, на него нашло на минуту сомнение в возможности устроить ту новую жизнь, о которой он мечтал дорогой. Все эти следы его жизни как будто охватили его и говорили ему: «Нет, ты не уйдешь от нас и не будешь другим, а будешь такой же, каков был: с сомнениями, вечным недовольством собой, напрасными попытками исправления и падениями и вечным ожиданием счастья, которое не далось и невозможно тебе.» (18:99/100).<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Ginzburg, *On Psychological Prose*, p. 246.

<sup>286</sup> *ibid.* p. 263.

<sup>287</sup> [The study was slowly lit up by the candle that was brought. Familiar details emerged: deer’s antlers, shelves of books, the back of the stove with a vent that had long been in need of repair, his father’s sofa, the big desk, an open book on the desk, a broken ashtray, a notebook with his handwriting. When he saw it all, he was overcome by a momentary doubt of the possibility of setting up that new life he had dreamed up on the way. All these traces of his life seemed to seize hold of him and say to him: ‘No, you

With books and papers strewn across Levin's desk, it would appear that writing itself is yet another failed project. Levin sits amidst the wreckage of his past and entertains disconnected visions much like Nekhliudov reflected on Davydka and Ilya. But there is a crucial difference. Levin remains committed to married life in the face of that life's improbability, though he is far less ecstatic than Nekhliudov's in the earlier character's sense of commitment ("this is it!"): "он чувствовал, что в глубине его души что-то устанавливалось, умерялось, и укладывалось" [he felt something in the depths of his soul was being established, adjusted, settled] (18:102/95). Disillusionment here merges with idealism, as though Levin has absorbed the lesson intended for Nekhliudov long ago: one strives toward happiness, "calmly bearing the burden of evil." The perspective attained by Nekhliudov at the end of "Utro pomeschchika" is transformed, in *Anna Karenina*, into a broader, indeed more fatalistic vision. It accommodates the demands of necessity which were envisioned at the start of the *Roman pomeschchika*. The novelist and his subject are now bound ever-more closely together.

Just as the relics of the past suggest to Levin that he, too, is an object, unable to change himself as a subject ought, a steward enters to remind him of the source of that despairing realization: peasant workers (18:252/154). Representing the "slovenliness" that he himself seeks to overcome, Levin's peasants have burnt the buckwheat. Levin strides into the fields in a state of vexation, performing his recently lamented failure "to be different." Upon entering the fields, however, Levin finds peace from his shame, which lifts once he is among those who, as Bondsmen in a Hegelian sense, cannot behold him. Here, peasants constitute "life" as a medium in which a single self-consciousness can release himself from the other's gaze and perhaps even his own view of himself. Stiva's reflections on his own shame at the very outset of the novel offer a telling description of the answer which Levin finds among his peasants: "Ответ этот: надо жить потребностями дня, то есть, забыться. Забыться сном уже нельзя, по крайней мере до ночи ... стало быть, надо забыться сном жизни [That answer is: one must live for the needs of the day, in other words, become oblivious. To become oblivious in dreams was impossible now, at least until nighttime ... and so one had to become oblivious in the dream of life] (18:6/4).

The precept of self-forgetting could well be delivered by Levin's peasant workers, and it tracks just as close to a negative valuation ("false routine, vice, suspicion, helplessness") as it does to a positive sense of release. From this perspective, the workers' refrain, "leave it in the hands of God" is not a blessing of religious wisdom, but an "expression of everything that opposes Levin." That opposition lies at the root of Levin's most profound despair throughout the novel, including the period surrounding his brother's death when he seeks accord with his workers but cannot find it: "интересы его были им не только чужды и непонятны, но фатально противоположны их самым справедливым интересам" [his interests were not only foreign and incomprehensible to them, but fatally opposed to their own must just interests] (18:384/321).

In one scene, the value of life ascribed to peasants begins in the negative: they are, helpless and vice-ridden, stealing hay from his sister's estate. Levin visits this estate to intervene in the conflict and, settling the issue, demonstrates his distance from the workers by sitting on a hay stack and observing them. In this elevated stance, Levin here becomes an emblem for point of view. Relinquishing himself to the view of workers before him, he takes a particular interest in a young couple at whom he begins "looking all the more intently" (*vnimatel'nee prismotrelsia*)

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won't escape us and be different, you'll be the same as you were: with doubts, an eternal dissatisfaction with yourself, vain attempts to improve, and failures, and an eternal expectation of the happiness that has eluded you and is not possible for you'] (93).



(18:289/274). Levin studies the couple much as Nekhliudov had reflected on his serfs from a distance at the end of “Utro pomeshchika.” Whereas in Nekhliudov’s vision, Ilya performed a subjugation to God, this peasant couple in *Anna Karenina* depicts another sort of union, one which so often fails to be maintained among the novel’s characters: marriage.

The haystack scene, famous for the existential reflections it produces in a key moment in Levin’s plot, begins with this couple, described to Levin by a passerby who tells him that the couple is recently married and have not consummated that marriage: “Год целый не понимал ничего, да и стыдился” [for a whole year (the husband) understood nothing and was bashful besides]. Just as Ilya combined freedom with devotion, this couple combines sexual innocence with social order. That innocence leaves room for Levin to participate in the union for which he longs:

Молодая баба работала легко, весело и ловко. Крупное, слезавшееся сено не бралось сразу на вилы. Она сначала расправляла его, совывала вилы, потом упругим и быстрым движением налегала на них всею тяжестью своего тела и тотчас же перегибая перетянутую красным кушаком спину, выпрямлялась и, выставляя полные груди из под белой занавески, с ловкою ухваткой перехватывала руками вилы и вскидывала навилину высоко на воз (ibid).<sup>288</sup>

After his own marriage, alas, Levin continues to hear the echoes of dissatisfaction to which the objects in his study—and all indications of his own objecthood—give voice. There are no happy families, only happy interactions with peasants about families. More satisfying than marriage is this vision of it among the peasantry, who are able to commit themselves to an imperfect life in a way that Levin cannot. Not only is this couple married, they are at work.

From this revaluation comes a different version of the statement that, in its previous version, expresses “everything that opposed Levin”: “Бог дал день, Бог дал силы. И день и силы посвящены труду, и в нем самом награда. А для кого труд? Какие будут плоды труда? Это соображения посторонние и ничтожные [God had given the day, God had given the strength. Both day and strength had been devoted to labor and in that lay the reward. And whom as this labor for? What would its fruits be? These considerations were irrelevant and insignificant] (18:290/275). With these lines, peasant interiority is written out of the text. Here, the absence of self-conscious reflection, of endless questioning, is profoundly positive. Levin imagines a statement of the kind a peasant might make (God gave the day) and entertains a question of the kind that a peasant would not.

Among peasants, Levin achieves a degree of self-forgetting in which one sort of shame disappears: he is not (for a time) beheld. Two extremes, life and reflection, maintain one another, and the divide becomes too stark as Levin drifts into abstraction, reflecting on the difference. While workers surround him with their unquestioning life, Levin remains riveted to his position on the haystack, losing track of time as he drifts into his own form of oblivion, contemplation: “он ничего не мог сделать и должен был лежать и смотреть и слушать” [he could do nothing and had to lie there and look and listen] (18:290/275). In that contemplation, the narrative cannot follow him, requiring, as Lukács argues, a solid object. The night that passes is thus described post factum, and the narrative finds traction once more when, coming to his senses, Levin

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<sup>288</sup> [The young woman worked easily, cheerfully and skillfully. The thick, packed-down hay would not go right on the fork. She first loosened it up, stuck the fork in, then leaned the whole weight of her body on it with a supple and quick movement and, straightening up at once, curving her back tightly girded with a red sash, her full breasts showing under the white smock, deftly shifted her grip on the fork and heaved the load high up on the cart] (274).

awakens to witness Kitty, his future bride, passing in a carriage: “Светлая и задумчивая, вся исполненная изящной и сложной внутренней, чуждой Левину жизни, она смотрела через него на зарю восхода [Bright and thoughtful, all filled with a graceful and complex inner life to which Levin was a stranger, she looked through him at the glowing sunset] (18:292/277).

One sense of shame is traded for another as Levin turns red at the thought that he had only just entertained marrying a peasant. Only in first entertaining and then rejecting this option, can the novel to resume its course. Life without perspective, configured by the peasant, is thus replaced by a world of interiorities bridging across one another, and Levin leaves the scene of peasants not by making a choice but by realizing that he does not have to. In the end, he desires what he should desire, his own social station. In this way, Levin finds himself in accord with the peasant couple whom he gazes upon, for they ultimately desire the same and with them Levin has, in any case, imaginatively merged.

In Levin’s final crisis at the end of the novel, shame reappears (“you’ll be the same as you always were: eternally dissatisfied...”) before it is mitigated by the same lessons of the haystack scene: “Так же буду сердиться на Ивана кучера ... так же будет стена между святая святых моей душу и другими, даже женой моей ... но жизнь моя теперь, вся моя жизнь ... имеет несомненный смысл добра, который я властен вложить в нее! [I’ll get angry in the same way at the coachman Ivan ... there will be the same wall between my soul’s holy of holies and other people, even my wife ... but my life now, my whole life ... has the unquestionable meaning of the good which it is in my power to put into it!] (19:399/817.) Here, Levin’s disappointment stems in part from the fact that peasants (such as the coachman) disobey him and in part from the fact that Kitty remains a stranger to his own inner life. Unsurprisingly, he finds reconciliation in the same place he had settled upon: mutual inwardness. Marriage, J. Hillis Miller writes, expresses in the nineteenth-century novel this inwardness insofar as it is “a ceremony in which bonds are created and sustained over an unapproachable darkness.”<sup>289</sup> Given the failure of these bonds across nearly every subplot in the novel, however, it is safe to say that marriage is tenuous. More stable are those between master and serf; it is through this apparently natural bond that social bonds are underwritten and secured.

Throughout Levin’s plot, crises are intertwined with oddly concrete economic concerns, from burnt buckwheat to “fatally opposed interests” and stolen hay. The same holds true for his final crisis and its resolution. In the last scenes of the novel, the advice Levin receives from a worker to “live for the soul” strikes him as a revelation: “thoughts burst from some locked-up place” [мысли толпою как будто вырвались откуда-то иззаперти] (19:376/794). It comes from a conversation about debt relief. Levin asks the worker Fedor how Platon, “a wealthy and good peasant from the same village” who leases land and equipment “makes it pay” if he does not collect [*vyruchaet*] (ibid). The need to “make it pay” is linked for Levin with marriage and family, whose needs compete with those of his workers. In the novel’s last lines, quoted above, Levin reconciles such demands (and the anger provoked by his own needs) with acquiescence; wealth with charity; master with serf.

When Levin asks, “what am I and why am I here?” in the final scene and elsewhere, death, a central theme of Hegel’s Lord and Bondsman scenario, is at the core of his concerns. For Hegel, the Bondsman’s awareness of death brings him close to the true nature of consciousness – its “pure negativity.” This revelation appears for the Bondsman first as the threat coming from the Lord who dominates him, but ultimately through his labor, a process which turns the life of the subject into an object for others.<sup>290</sup> Within this framework, Levin’s alternating needs to reject

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<sup>289</sup> Hillis J. Miller, *Others* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 79.

<sup>290</sup> Butler and Malabou, “You Be My Body for Me,” p. 619.

and accept death bring him repeatedly close to his workers. For Hegel, what appears as a total objectification is in fact the culmination of self-consciousness *for-itself*: a thing which is not attached to life only because it embodies the negativity at the heart of life:

To begin with, servitude has the lord for its essential reality; hence the *truth* for it is the independent consciousness that is *for itself*. However, servitude is not yet aware that this truth is implicit in it. But it does in fact contain within itself this truth of pure negativity and being-for-self, for it has experienced this as its own essential nature. For this consciousness has been fearful, not of this or that particular thing or just at odd moments, but its whole being has been seized with dread; for it has experienced the fear of death, the absolute Lord. In that experience it has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations. But this pure universal movement, the absolute melting-away of everything stable, is the simple, essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, *pure being-for-self*, which consequently is *implicit* in this consciousness.<sup>291</sup>

A few words on death in the Lord and Bondsman scenario will reveal a striking connection between death as a theme in *Anna Karenina* and the rejection of society with which the novel is also concerned.

In Hegel's parable, the Bondsman has what Butler describes as "interiorized finitude," not as a form of detachment but as a different kind of singularity: "nobody can take another's dying from him."<sup>292</sup> This emphasis on finitude differs from readings such as Kojève's in which the labor of the Bondsman affords his complete detachment.<sup>293</sup> By contrast, non-teleological readings such as Butler's as well as Slavoj Žižek's stress the impossibility of such detachment on any account; it is only finitude we access, nothing more.

Let me dwell on these interpretations of Hegel that stress the *impossibility* of detachment to draw out the connections between death and sociality which together give shape to the crises experienced by Levin throughout *Anna Karenina*—from the combination of "fatally opposed interests" on the estate and the death of his brother to this moment when workers "show him their zeal" but will (like him) eventually die. In the scene in which Levin stands in the threshing barn wondering "why all this is being done," he imagines his workers' inevitable death. Why is acknowledging the other inextricable from acknowledging death? First, as Žižek clarifies, externalizing oneself into one's opposite entails dissolving the barriers that establish a certain kind of singular subjectivity. In a sense, overcoming a fear of death, as Levin seems to do at the novel's conclusion, requires radical isolation. Embracing death without resistance ("...the power I have ... to put into life!") requires merging with the very institutions which seem to oppress one's identity:

...in more contemporary language, one could call [recognition] a full identification with the aggressor: the subject should recognize in the external Terror, in this negativity which constantly threatens to annihilate him, the very core of his (universal) subjectivity. In other words, he should fully identify with it. <...> If there is a 'semantic choice' that underlies Hegel's thought, it is not the desperate wager that, retroactively, one will be able to tell a consistent, all-encompassing and meaningful story in which every detail will be allotted its proper place, but, on the contrary, the weird certainty <...> that, with every

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<sup>291</sup> Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 117.

<sup>292</sup> Butler and Malabou, "You Be My Body for Me," p. 619.

<sup>293</sup> *ibid.*

figure of consciousness or form of life, things will always somehow ‘go wrong,’ that each position will generate an excess which will augur its own destruction.<sup>294</sup>

What is at stake in Levin’s crisis is the recognition that the whole bustling world of the capitals, of the English Club and its endless affairs, of the whole order of serfdom and the changes that followed from it, are reflections of himself, his inner-most soul. As long as death, and social otherness, is at the heart of identity, nothing (quite literally) erases it. One locates oneself in that erasure, finding identity in the most oppositional of social forms and the most estranged others. Jameson, too, suggests the way in which Hegelian recognition in the Lord and Bondsman parable is on the most fundamental level a matter of social intergration in the broadest sense:

This is then a wholly new sense of recognition: not that of the enigmatic other as a human like myself or an embodiment of the same freedom as which I know myself; rather a recognition of myself in the object world and its social institutions, a recognition of these as my own constructions, as the only temporarily alienated embodiments of my own activity.<sup>295</sup>

Against this background, preoccupations with death in *Anna Karenina* are linked to the only apparently superfluous details of landowner life – from burnt hay to debt relief – for important reasons. Equally suggestive is the fact that the combined problems of sociality and self-consciousness are resolved in the novel in terms emphatically contrary to Hegel’s. In Levin’s final reconciliation, social implications are obscured when Platon’s advice to “live for the soul” is taken to mean drawing its boundaries. Only this soul contains in itself subject and object and provides a source of meaning to be injected into mere life, whereas society continues to be objectified as something alien to the self. Levin’s final lines indicate, in contrast to the sense of impermanence suggested in the readings of Hegel I have outlined, that his life is or could be “a consistent, all-encompassing and meaningful story.” It could be a novel. Shame is inevitable but is counterbalanced by the image produced when all failures come to rest and the only thing that remains is the subject. Rather than internalizing negativity, the subject builds itself in the contrast.

Even so, the “weird certainty” of failure (what Žižek calls Hegel’s own positive ground for history) remains present at the conclusion of Levin’s plot just as it had appeared in the outline to the *Roman pomeschchika* and “Utro pomeschchika.” In *Anna Karenina*, failure departs dramatically from Hegel’s model; it does not connect one to institutions but further isolates one from them. Still, the concerns of debt, marriage, and agricultural reform are consistently linked to the novel’s most abstract questions. Given such persistent connections, a model which makes space for sociality can be said to haunt the edges of *Anna Karenina*. Even Levin is brought close to his own undoing among his workers though he continues to depend on them for his most powerful assertions. Returning to the scene at threshing barn with which this section began, a sense of the subject’s essential negativity emerges with shifts in narrative perspective. In such moments, Levin is drawn out of himself and into a larger context, one that appears to him as essentially arbitrary. From these perspectival revelations, the sort that often induce shame, Levin consistently returns to the project of building himself.

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<sup>294</sup> Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, pp. 196;207.

<sup>295</sup> Jameson, *Hegel Variations*, p. 106.

As I have suggested, the project of establishing subjectivity requires, in Tolstoy's works, the medium of peasant characters, in large part as a mechanism of contrast. When Levin sits on the haystack, for example, he distinguishes himself through the creation of point of view, one that is associated with a "reflective" capacity and, in particular, the landowner's wider vision of the estate as a whole. In this regard, though novelistic point of view contains, in Tolstoy's work, "subjectivity in a point," the containment of vision is attended by a broad, reflective outlook. In particular that outlook is concerned with calculations: not the experience of threshing the hay, but how much hay has been threshed, and how long it is taking. Thus, in the threshing barn, when Levin's perspective expands outward and seems himself standing, absurdly, as an object who pretends otherwise, it contracts again into calculations: "at the same time ... he looked at his watch to calculate how much had been threshed in an hour" [Он думал это и вместе с тем глядел на часы, чтобы расчесть, сколько обмолят в час] (19:375/793).

Let me conclude this section with perhaps the most well-known of peasant scenes in this period's literature and a singularly positive image within the oftentimes despairing concerns of *Anna Karenina*. I refer to the *Arbeitskur* Levin enjoys when he retreats from the prattling of his brother, Sergei, to mow in the field with his workers. Here Levin loses track of time, his narrow point of view, and the very tensions of the novel as Lukács and others have defined them. This scene brings together secondary characters "who can only be hinted at" and the "central romantic experiences" which define for Lukács the novel's contrast to subjectivity simultaneously longed for and impossible. What is elsewhere only possible *as* the novel (a distantly rendered union of subject-object) is here rendered within it.

Despite the sense of oneness that Levin experiences when he mows in the fields with his peasants, the whole scenario depends on a contrast between "life itself" and social reality. This contrast is sharply drawn in reference to Sergei before the mowing scene can begin. Sergei views the estate as literary material whereas Levin views it as "the place of life—that is, joy, suffering, labor" [место жизни, то есть радостей, страданий, труда] (18:251/237). Sergei is interested in provincial politics, challenging Levin to return to his work at the *zemstvo*. He has "unchanging notions" and sees himself in various roles. Levin declares, in response: "I am Konstantin Levin, nothing more" (18:179/170). In these ways, Levin lays claim to life and all the negativity of social existence is contained in Sergei. What is elsewhere found among peasant workers, from "unchanging notions" to collective identity, is, for the time being, transplanted onto him. So, too, is literary conventionality contained in Sergei's sentimental descriptions of the countryside; the novel retreats into the fields along with Levin to align itself with life.

Eager to see the harvest come to fruition, Levin flees Sergei bursting with excitement. His entrance into the fields is configured by a changing perspective, growing more passive and ceasing to calculate (e.g., "how much had been threshed in an hour").

Еще с горы открылась ему под горою тенистая, уже скошенная часть луга, с сереющими рядами и черными кучками кафтанов, снятых косцами и том месте, откуда они зашли первый раз. По мере того, как он подъезжал, ему открывались шедшие друг за другом растянутою вереницей и различно махавшие косами мужики, кто в кафтанах, кто в одних рубахах. Он насчитал их сорок два человека (18:263).<sup>296</sup>

<sup>296</sup> [From the top of the hill there opened out before him, at its foot, the shady, already mowed part of the meadow, with greying rows and black heaps of caftans, which the mowers had taken off where they started their first swath. As he rode nearer, the muzhiks came into his view, following each other in a strung out line and swinging their scythes variedly, some in caftans, some just in shirts. He counted forty-two men] (249).

A whole world is laid at Levin's feet, its contours describing a landscape which is natural yet bears the traces of labor.<sup>297</sup> The shaded rows are those which have been mowed; discarded caftans indicate their progress. When the passive verb phrase *otkrylas' emu* [opened out before him] is repeated in its imperfective aspect, *emu otkryvalis'* [were coming into view], boundaries blur between what has happened and what is still happening, and Levin enters a moment that might be described as the eternal present.

As Levin begins to work, his singular perspective on the world dissipates. The shame that suggests itself when others smirk at his initial, awkward movements slips away. This is followed by sensory awareness; rain begins to fall, and Levin does not notice it. "Он ничего не думал, ничего не желал, кроме того, чтобы не отстать от мужиков и как можно лучше сработать" [He thought of nothing, desired nothing, except not to lag behind and to do the best job he could] (18:265/250). Losing, first, self-consciousness, Levin then seems to lose consciousness entirely. Phrases that describe what Levin might be feeling such as "так он устал" [he was so tired] render him more as a body than a mind; "he was so tired" tells us little more than the sweat that is pouring off his brow. Levin thus becomes the eyes of the text rather than its conscious filter. Whatever he is feeling is also not particular to him; just as he begins to feel tired, the worker in front of him pauses for a rest.

Although peasants could in principle provide another perspective, the narrative does not enter into their points of view. Escaping the grip of Levin's consciousness and finding no other to lodge itself in, the narrative cannot sustain this immersive mode. When the work ceases, the text returns to its central point: "Очнувшись, Левин стал соображать, сколько скошено и сколько еще можно сделать нынче" [Coming to his senses, Levin began to count how much was done and how much could still be finished today] (18:269/254). When Levin comes to his senses, the text reenters its central focal point just as Levin also takes account of the work that remains to be done. Conflict returns in the cross-purposes of landowner and peasant where the former wants more fields to be mowed and the latter, recompense in vodka.

In its materialization of "life," a union of subject and object, the mowing scene epitomizes the novel as much as it seems to contrast it. In contrast to the mowing scene, the bulk of the narrative in *Anna Karenina* tracks between characters who can only misread one another, cast in one consciousness and then another. Like the concluding scene of "Utro pomeshchika" when Nekhliudov reimagines his serfs from afar, the mowing scene creates a fantasy sure to lead to the question at its heart: "why am I not what I made?" Indeed, the whole text that surrounds this scene, a union of subject and object from which the subject inevitably rises, offers variations on this question. When the spell of Levin's *Arbeitskur* is broken, master and serf return to the roles that they never really left.

While Levin's plot establishes the promise of the realist novel as the union of subject and object from the heights of distant reflection, Anna's plot offers a configuration of that same union from a different perspective. Drawing together themes of fictionality and fate, Anna's plot insists on the weird certainty that things will go wrong, the absolute slipping-away of everything stable, and the easy slippage between dreams and reality. Such a merger is symbolized not by "the book of life" which assures us that the subject writes his own meaningful story, as Levin

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<sup>297</sup> Orwin discusses the shifts in nature/society in Tolstoy's novels: "Peasants are natural in *Anna Karenina* in that they fully accept the rule of nature over their physical lives. But although they are *in*, they are not entirely *of* nature. ... the question of life—and death—comes from nature, but that one natural response, the response of faith, is itself, in its content, supranatural. *Tolstoy's Art and Thought*, pp. 148-9.

seems to do. It is rather captured by the revelation that life is no less invented than the dramas which pass through it.

*Anna: The Peasant Torn Asunder*

On the eve of her suicide, Anna has a dream.

Утром страшный кошмар, несколько раз повторявшийся ей в сновидениях еще до связи с Вронским, представился ей опять и разбудил ее. Старичок-мужичок с взлохмаченною бородой что-то делал, нагнувшись над железом, приговаривая бессмысленные французские слова, и она, как и всегда при этом кошмаре (что и составляло его ужас), чувствовала, что мужичок этот не обращает на нее внимания, что делает этот какое-то страшное дело в железе над нею, что-то страшное делает над ней. И она проснулась в холодном поту (19:332).<sup>298</sup>

For many scholars, the peasant with the rumpled beard is a metaphor. Many also note the dense network of images formed by peasants throughout Anna's plot. An earlier dream is similar to its later version, though in the first, the peasant's muttered words are discernible: "*Il faut le batter le fer*" [It must be beaten, pounded, kneaded] (18:379/358). Gary Browning traces a history of the interpretation of these images, beginning with Nabokov, who interprets them as showing "what Anna's sinful life has done to her soul."<sup>299</sup> Browning sees a connection between the peasant and the men in Anna's life who are culpable in her "fall," that is, adultery and the loveless marriage that leads her there. Gustafson builds on the notion that these nightmares are, in essence, moral. In his reading, the peasant is Anna's conscience, "telling her what she must do and how she will be punished," noting that the incessant mutterings indicate that "conscience is always alive," despite waking attempts to ignore it.<sup>300</sup> For Gustafson, Anna's perspective becomes increasingly skewed throughout the novel, rendering her dreams more telling indices of her reality than her waking thoughts. Mandelker builds on this sense of inversion by tracing intertexts from a "mythic and tragic tradition" and linking Anna's peasant dreams to a pre-modern, fatalistic rendering of reality.<sup>301</sup> These dreams are at the heart of interpretations that render fatalism outside, indeed opposed to, the moral principles of the novel.

Crossing the boundaries of separate characters' psyches, these dream figures also appear in the novel's plot in connection to the industrial site of the railroad, just as they do in the dream. (The figure "bends over iron" and works on it.) Browning counts four instances: a worker who dies when he falls on the tracks (the first scene in the novel in which Anna appears, interpreted by her as a "bad omen"); a stoker who enters the car of a train (when Anna returns from her first meeting with Vronsky); and two workers described in the scenes that lead to Anna's suicide.

Recent scholarship explores the ways in which these images encode themes of industrialization. Alexei Pavlenko, for example, draws a connection between Anna's dream

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<sup>298</sup> [In the morning a dreadful nightmare, which had come to her repeatedly even before her liason with Vronsky, came to her again and woke her up. A little old muzhik with a disheveled beard was doing something, bent over iron, muttering meaningless French words, and, as always was in this nightmare (here lay its terror), she felt that this little muzhik paid no attention to her, but was doing this dreadful thing with iron over her, was doing something dreadful over her. And she woke up in a cold sweat] (752).

<sup>299</sup> Browning, Gary. "Peasant Dreams in *Anna Karenina*," *The Slavic and Eastern European Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (2000), pp. 525.

<sup>300</sup> Gustafson, *Resident and Stranger*, p. 311.

<sup>301</sup> Mandelker, *Framing Anna Karenina*, p. 162.

peasants and peasant scenes in Levin's plot by suggesting that together they form "a new anxiety triggered by the new, post-Emancipation, early industrial and capitalist society."<sup>302</sup> This anxiety is for Pavlenko at the bottom of the "unconscious presence of history" in the novel that registers a fear that the peasantry's transformation from dependent serfs to independent workers could render them capable of revolt.<sup>303</sup> In a similar interpretative vein, Ani Kokobobo suggests how Anna's characterization is "set in opposition to living for the soul" through grotesque imagery ("the more beautiful [Anna] becomes, the more grotesque") because it "reflects the instability of the Great Reform and the exigencies of socioeconomic change."<sup>304</sup> Passion, uncontrollable change, and excess: these are social concerns which illuminate connections between Anna's plot and her peasant dreams—and between Levin's plot and his crises—adding another perspective to their moral conflicts.

Building on these interpretations as they link depictions of industrialized workers to social concerns and suggest how such concerns inform the novel as a whole, I argue, with Pavlenko, that peasants index "the unconscious presence of history," though my perspective is that peasants offer an image not only of how they, peasants, could harm the nobility, but of what the nobility (and not only they) stands to learn about itself. Peasants are the presence of history in the broadest sense as a force which impinges on the subject and, in this way, correlates with the theme of fate in Anna's plot. At stake is the difference between the attainment of a truly free self-consciousness as Hegel understands it and as Tolstoy's novel engages the issue, that is, within the dynamics of perspective. I have been suggesting that these dynamics are ideas in themselves about how a subject is constituted through contrasts. The role of fate in this project is clear to Hegel, who writes that the goal for self-consciousness is "to recognize its own goal and doing in fate, and its fate in its own goal and doing."<sup>305</sup> It is also a leitmotif in *Anna Karenina*.

The fullest expression of fate is, not coincidentally, the symbol of the nightmare peasant. These are pre-modern symbols (in Mandelker's interpretation) but they also prefigure new, post-realist literary trends. Eikhenbaum interprets Anna's dream images as departures from the style of conventional realism at precisely those moments when one would expect to find its devices; instead of sharpening events in the plot, the dream's "artistic significance does not go beyond psychologism ... it is pure psychology tied to symbolism."<sup>306</sup> Roman Jakobson's interpretation of Anna's red handbag as an "inconsequential detail" that commands the novel's attention in the scene of her suicide develops the notion that there is something about Anna's plot that defies realism, and something about it that epitomizes realism.<sup>307</sup> Details sharpen the "concrete" world, but they also appear to take on a life of their own. They are symbolic, though all of them add up to the theme of fate.

Bringing together themes of fictionality and fatalism, the concluding lines of Anna's plot leave scholars with questions about where exactly the scene's referents are located: "Мужичок, приговаривая что-то, работал над железом. И свеча, при которой она читала исполненную тревог, обманов, горя и зла книгу, вспыхнула более ярким, чем когда-нибудь светом,

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<sup>302</sup> Pavlenko, "Peasant as the Political Unconscious of *Anna Karenina*," p. 20.

<sup>303</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> Ani Kokobobo, *Russian Grotesque Realism: The Great Reforms and The Gentry Decline* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2018), pp. 106;134.

<sup>305</sup> Quoted in Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 164. "The underlying goal, the reconciliation of man and fate, is described here briefly as a condition in which 'consciousness ... would recognize ... its own goal and doing in fate, and its fate in its own goal and doing, would recognize its own essence in this necessity.'"

<sup>306</sup> Eikhenbaum, *Tolstoi in the Seventies*, p. 144.

<sup>307</sup> Roman Jakobson, "On Realism in Art" in *Language in Literature*, ed. by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 25.



осветила ей все то, что прежде было во мраке, затрещала, стала меркнуть и навсегда потухла” [A little muzhik, muttering to himself, was working over iron. And the candle by the light of which she had been reading that book filled with anxieties, deceptions, grief and evil, flared up brighter than ever, lit up for her all that had once been in darkness, sputtered, grew dim, and went out forever] (19:349/376). In the context of the realistically described train station, where is this candle or this book?<sup>308</sup> Where, indeed, is the muttering peasant? As the link between waking life and dreams, the peasant figure appears to reside both within the plot and on a higher, symbolic plane. The symbol is addressed to Anna, readers, and the novel itself. The heightened fictionality of Anna’s plot, circling here and throughout the novel on the image of the peasant, is indexed by fate as the novel thematizes it, that is, a strange combination of what we invent and what we cannot avoid. Whereas the conclusion of Levin’s plot represents a certain form of the novel (writing against mere life and evoking life itself) Anna’s conclusion represents another. She does not write; she reads, an act which places her close to the peasant workers that inaugurate her story and spell its end.

Anna’s plot begins, like Levin’s, with a sense of shame, sparked, in her case, by the beginning of her affair with Vronsky. In a well-known scene, Anna returns from Moscow after this initial meeting, when a new sense of life stirs within her. Anna’s shame is provoked when, reading a book describing “английского счастья баронетства и имения” [English happiness, a baronetcy and an estate], she suddenly casts it aside: “вдруг она почувствовала, что ему должно быть стыдно и что ей стыдно этого самого” [suddenly she felt that he must be ashamed and that she was ashamed of the same thing] (18:107/100). As we have already seen, shame arises once a subject “reads” him or herself. Wishing to act in this baron’s life rather than read about it, Anna turns her gaze on her surroundings, giving herself over to sensory perception. She thus pushes shame away much like Levin when she sets down the novel and “strides out into the fields,” as it were, in order to enact her own in kind of baronetcy as far she can access it, pressing a cool knife to her cheek in a gesture of eroticism that she does not verbalize. It is in this moment that a peasant worker enters in the train car to check the temperature and appears to Anna to be gnawing at the wall. When he seems to fall through the floor in an explosion of heat, expressing the climax of Anna’s inarticulate sensations, the environment returns to normalcy; it ceases to be allegorical. One might imagine the stoker as a *bezrobotnyi* who has lost himself on the road; the fantasy from “Utro pomeshchika” has here turned into a nightmare.

This scene is often interpreted as an expression of Anna’s sexuality, though desire in its broader definition is perhaps more pertinent, for it outlines the constitutive feature of a subject poised between constitution or dissolution. The relationship between reading and perceiving that is enacted by Anna extends the domain of the subject to readers: we occupy characters just as they occupy the world, that is, as seers unseen – except by readers like us who only see them from the inside as desiring subjects. Reading is desire, doubled.<sup>309</sup> When Anna’s desires are reflected in her heightened perception, she becomes, as Alyson Tapp has described it, “an organ of sensory perception alone.”<sup>310</sup> What we as readers seem to want is shown to us in grotesque extreme.

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<sup>308</sup> Elisabeth Stenbock-Fermor also discusses the image of the candle, highlighting its oddity within an aesthetics of realism. *The Architecture of Anna Karenina: A History of its Writing, Structure and Message* (Lisse, Belgium: Peter de Ridder, 1975), pp. 41-52.

<sup>309</sup> Cf. Gallagher, “The Rise of Fictionality,” p. 351.

<sup>310</sup> Alyson Tapp, “Moving Stories: (E)motion and Narrative in *Anna Karenina*,” *Russian Literature*, LXI (2007), p. 351.

At the same time that Anna's vision is intensified, however, she also enters an external perspective on herself, reinstating the "self-reading" that initially led to shame: "Аннушка ли подле нее или чужая?" [Was that Annushka beside her, or some stranger?] (18:107/101). Although the question is clearly Anna's, it is not attributed to her. With the absence of narrative commentary, Anna seems to offer an accurate, or at any rate unchallenged, perspective on her world. In the line quoted above, narration mimics the logic of a dream, where there is no distinction between what is, and what is thought.

In Anna's growing awareness of her own emptiness, she does not gain a reflection of herself that holds the two oppositions in balance, I and not-I. With his back turned, the stoker does not recognize Anna and prefigures her recurrent nightmare: "мужичок этот не обращает на нее внимания" [this little muzhik paid no attention to her]. The "life of the body," as Hegel's commentators have described the state of the Bondsman and scholars of Tolstoy have described Anna's plot, overwhelms her, and there is nothing left of a subject who can oppose it, except an obscure sense that she ought to be more.<sup>311</sup> What many scholars have interpreted as the symbol of Anna's conscience can thus be read as the trace of an incomplete subject outside of moral implications. The theme of internal division, as commentators note, is most vividly rendered in the railroad worker's death under the train (it splits him in two) that initiates Anna's plot. Here, the end of Anna's fated story is inscribed into its beginning, and she falls into the place which is laid out for her. The motif of division, rendered in shifts in narrative perspective that maintain a view on a character as simultaneously subject and object, is inextricable from the image of the peasant, suggesting that that motif bears an essential correlation to the social dynamics couched within it.

The foregoing analysis of narrative forms, from the loss of singular perspective to the emergence of free indirect discourse, helps isolate the freighted values which differentiate Levin and Anna, showing their characters to be defined by a very similar split. Both Anna and Levin assert their subjectivities at times successfully and at times unsuccessfully, and both sense the false divisions on which that assertion rests. In Anna's plot, shifts in narrative perspective show the extremes of narrative's ability to open out into the processes that entangle self and society as well as intimate the sense that everything is invented yet is determined. Anna interprets her world with power and nuance, but is shadowed by the sense that it is not her interpretation that generates the course of her life. Levin's reconciliation reestablishes that sense of possibility, configuring an active authorship that is pitted against life, whereas Anna's plot suggests that life is not written (or not only written) but read – a network of symbols given meaning by those who see them.

When Karenin writes to Anna upon learning of her affair, she responds: "Что я могу писать? ... Что я могу решить одна? Что я знаю? Чего я хочу? Что я люблю?" [What can I write? What can I decide alone? What do I know? What do I want?] (18:310/293). She decides, finally, to write hardly anything at all: "Я получила ваше письмо. А" [I have received your letter. A] (18:310/294). Behind every form of expression lie innumerable alternatives. Anna's choice between options remains unresolved or is rather resolved as receptivity itself. One could see this surfeit of possibilities in terms of plentitude, but one could also see it as lack. Anna could take a position, and things will still happen as they will. Such is the fatalism on which she insists throughout the novel in response to those who feel (perhaps too confidently) that something can always be done. To these suggestions, Anna insists on the impossibility of her position. Readers may well feel that both sides have a point. The problem remains how to think this reality together

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<sup>311</sup> Kokobobo explores the valences of Anna's plot as "the life of the body." *Russian Grotesque Realism*, p. 34

with another, which Anna and Levin fail to do, namely, that saying *something* is possible even in the awareness that it will ultimately mean nothing. From this perspective, the peasant who Anna reads at the beginning of her story as a bad omen is less an emblem of her sin than an indication of this reality, what I have called history: the merger of mere life and life, or those things which oppose the subject, and those things which create it.

Anna cannot, in an important sense, write, yet the plot that surround her represents the essence of the novel as fiction, refracted through fatalism.<sup>312</sup> That plot, like the symbols Anna (and others) see around her, is contrived. When such contrivance is understood in the moral terms that are often applied to it, *Anna Karenina* seems to have achieved the realist project, fiction and life; Anna and Levin; a world of mere society and one of master and serf. Such readings take to heart Levin's dream of life, a construct that conceals its own constructed nature. Only when we are taken in by the promises of a landowner's life does the fatalism of Anna's plot ring false – morally and aesthetically. From such a perspective, these may appear as Anna does before her suicide: beautiful, but pathetic (Очень хороша! ... Но что-то жалкое есть в ней. Ужасно жалкое! (19:399/760). From another perspective, however, Anna's plot presents a version of subject-object union that is not so different from Levin's dream, one which I suggest is close to a Hegelian model in its emphasis on sociality, yet still quite far from it in its negative rendering. Woven into Levin's plot, even the most positively valued scenes such as his *Arbeitskur*, this version of life nevertheless recurs before it is dismissed – again and again.

Across the values of the novel there emerges a principle that Anna and Levin's peasants seem to share: “Алексей Александрович, — сказала она, взглядывая на него и не опуская глаз под его устремленным на ее прическу взором, — я преступная женщина, я дурная женщина, но я то же, что я была, что я сказала вам тогда, и приехала сказать вам, что я не могу ничего переменить [‘Alexei Alexandrovich,’ she said, looking up at him and now lowering her eyes under his gaze, directed at her hair, ‘I am a criminal woman, I am a bad woman, but I am the same as I said I was then, and I’ve come to tell you that I cannot change anything] (18:337/319). Despite their moral juxtaposition, Anna and Levin's workers share a sense of fatalism. Though the absence of an endlessly muttering conscience among Levin's workers is mitigated by a natural sense of the good through religious faith, their own desires are “above all, to work carelessly, obliviously, thoughtlessly” [работнику же хотелось работать как можно приятнее, с отдыхом, и главное — беззаботно и забывшись, не размышляя] (18:339/321).

Anna is, however, far from oblivious, neither defending her desire but insisting that it makes her “no different than she was before.” Karenin refuses to meet Anna's gaze though it is with this gaze that she suggests a revelation that is first intimated by serf characters in “Utro pomeshcika” and continues to characterize peasants in *Anna Karenina*. Peasants are what the master takes them to be: infractions against himself. In her response to Karenin, Anna makes a place for subjectivity even though, as before, she says almost nothing: “what I said before and what I say now.”

Even as vitalism is reconfigured in Levin's plot, it continues to register the failure of a subject to securely establish itself. This failure underlies the peasant dream-images, extending

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<sup>312</sup> In a letter in 1859, the year of his first of several renunciations of fiction, Tolstoy declared: “writing stories is pointless, especially by people who feel sad and don't really know what they want from life. In this letter, he alludes to Turgenev, but feeling sad and not knowing what one wants also describes Tolstoy's reflections on himself during his second crisis in the seventies. One writes only with purpose, even with the acknowledgment of failure, yet being without purpose is constituting, and then disseminating, a more fundamental failure to which Tolstoy's novels do not admit: the failure of the subject. McLean, *In Quest of Tolstoy*, p. 17.

not just to Anna, but across the novel. One such dream visits Vronsky in a telling context. Tasked to escort a foreign prince who demands to be shown “specifically Russian pleasures,” Vronsky is aghast at what he comes to see as a reflection of himself: a subject unaware of the other’s perspective on him. The delusions of independent subjectivity are here shown for what they are: lunacy: “Он всю эту неделю не переставая испытывал чувство, подобное чувству человека, который был бы приставлен к опасному сумасшедшему, боялся бы сумасшедшего и вместе, по близости к нему, боялся бы и за свой ум [During the whole week he kept feeling like a man attached to some dangerous lunatic, fearing the lunatic and at the same time, from his closeness to him, fearing for his own reason] (18:373/354). In the wake of these insights, Vronsky dreams the same peasant dream that visits Anna before her suicide. It is not Vronsky’s guilt but a more fundamental (indeed structural) realization which penetrates his awareness: the subject is all those things it defines itself against.

### *Conclusion*

In launching a critique of industrialized peasant workers, *Anna Karenina* also calls into question the idyll of the master and the serf which it holds in contrast. Framed by anxieties surrounding the reform in 1856, “Utro pomeshchika” already posited the need for moral reform among peasants as a way (at least in part) to secure the position of the nobility. But even then, the dynamics of the master, who must fail, and the serf, who takes that failure too far (offering criticisms and no resolution) inscribe a tension within the narrative possibilities of realism. The subject, like the peasant, emerges as a solution and a problem. Configured in the social form of the master, subjectivity is the act of striving, lightly objectified from some external place (the novelist’s) yet resonant with the horizon of the writer who offers that objectification, applying pressure to the hero, but never so much as to collapse his inner life into conventional forms. The problem of such a subject is two-fold, expressed by the question that ends the earlier work, “Why am I not Ilya?” as well as the related question which is applicable to the writer, “Why am I not what I made?” Peasants configure “life” so that the realist novel draws upon it. This is the life which taunts Levin but to which he will inject meaning, and the “mere” life which the novel defines itself against. The contrast is comprised of social (and literary) convention, institutions with no purpose, and, to some extent, fiction itself.

Such are the tensions in which the representation of interiority, of consciousness articulated through the perspective of the other, emerges, reaching an apogee in *Anna Karenina* as a work which dwells in the shame that stems from an awareness of subject-object duality. This duality has its birth in the scandal provoked by the quintessential other whose defeat produces the Bondsman in Hegel’s parable and for Tolstoy, an externalized image of life. Anna’s plot registers the tensions of Levin’s in a way that foregrounds their connection to social concerns, and to the fact of sociality itself. The peasant images in her plot thus form subterranean reality (unconscious, ineluctable) which even the novel cannot seem to control. Still, these seemingly uncontrollable images illustrate the novel’s careful composition. Peasants index its artistry and bring that artistry in line with a conception of fate as an echo of history to which subjects must submit. Anna diligently reads peasants images as omens. These are particular to her, perhaps, but less containable as that most common of fates. Even Anna’s readings cannot master this reality, which defies her initial premonition (following the first dream of the peasant, which she reads as an omen for her death in childbirth). Vronsky and Karenin also believe that Anna will die, but she survives into the novel. Anna is not a pre-modern heroine who is taken by fate, but a modern subject who feels compelled by some external force to take her own life. The concerns associated

with Anna's split subjectivity are resolved in Levin's plot in his discovery of a religious faith that is mediated by peasant wisdom, though these concerns also nearly lead him to suicide. Levin is saved by returning to the divide which initiated the struggle in the first place.

The divided plots apportion the notion of life into its social and natural configurations. Yet the shadow of the industrialized worker, who is no different from the "careless, oblivious" peasant (except when guided by a landowner), also haunts Levin's plot. Levin's reflections on the thoughtlessness of workers stems in part from the fact that they *are* workers, that is, hired and thus (according to Levin) lacking a natural connectivity to the old-world estate. Given the similarities with the conflicts established in "Utro pomeschika," however, even enserfed peasants present problems of disorder. In this chapter, I have argued that such disorder is a product of the subject constituted in Tolstoy's narrative in contrast to peasants, who are the social embodiment of an essentially narrative form. This form is expressed as the excess of life and all that life entails, particularly in its association with society: embodiment, subjugation, convention, and positionality. In this dialectical constitution, the idyll of serfdom (a naturalized society constituted by serfs for the master) is the site which Tolstoy's novel's subjects tend and from which they necessarily flee.

By constituting this division, Tolstoy's narrative creates this idyll and places it out of reach, moving toward and away from life as the opposite of consciousness in the dynamics of perspective. The scenes leading up to Anna's suicide offer a final illustration of the way these dynamics can represent an extreme form of subject-object union, not as beyond language but as constituted within it. Before departing to the train station, Anna gazes in the mirror and in this gesture, she seems to become her own author. Peering at passersby from the carriage window on the way to her death, she sees clearly into their lives as a novelist might, alternating between reflections on herself and on others in a way that is verified by the text even as it appears clear precisely in its extreme negativity:

Этот хочет всех удивить и очень доволен собой, — подумала она, глядя на румяного приказчика, ехавшего на манежной лошади. — Да, того вкуса уж нет для него во мне. Если я уеду от него, он в глубине души будет рад. Это было не предположение, — она ясно видела это в том пронзительном свете, который открывал ей теперь смысл жизни и людских отношений ... Анна как будто видела их историю и все закоулки их души, перенесла свет на них. Но интересного тут не было, и она продолжала свою мысль (19:343).<sup>313</sup>

Anna's thoughts are corroborated by the narrator, who marks no difference from her perspective. She imagines "the cruelest words a man could say," and convinces herself that Vronsky has indeed said them. We know from Vronsky's perspective that Anna is not entirely wrong, even though to a certain extent she creates her own reality. Thus, her penetrating gaze sees clearly. The story she writes is the story of an author who sees reality for what it is but has no anchor with which to underwrite it. Anna asks, like Levin, why those around her are living at all, scoffing at a man who crosses himself (though not without genuine curiosity) in a manner that suggests her own obscured preoccupation with the soul that so troubles Levin when he hears of

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<sup>313</sup> ['This one wants to astonish everybody and is very pleased with himself,' she thought, looking at a red-cheeked sales clerk riding a rented horse. 'Yes, I no longer have the same savour for him. If I leave him, at the bottom of his heart he'll be glad. This was not a supposition. She saw it clearly in that piercing light which now revealed to her the meaning of life and of people's relations. <...> It was as if Anna could see their story and all the hidden corners of their souls, turning her light on them. But there was nothing interesting there, and she went on with her thinking] (766).

the advice to live for the soul (thinking that such words might be “stupid, vague, imprecise”) [ГЛУПЫМИ, НЕЯСНЫМИ, НЕТОЧНЫМИ] (19:377;795).

As Anna’s thoughts quicken, the narrator keeps pace, flitting between her assessments of others and herself. Seeing only the absence of fixed meaning, Anna transforms from a reader of omens into a desperate author, tearing from every passerby their life and seeing within them only their lack. Strangely, this tragic and frenetic illustration of novelistic irony, which undermines attempts at meaning-making with the endlessly applicable phrase, “not that,” brings to light a commonality not typically attained within focused plots on major characters. In the matter of a few sentences, we peer into the lives of coachmen and peasants, travelers and passersby, and are also given an arguably more vivid sense of their interiority than those of workers in Levin’s plot. Anna’s gaze ought to make us discard these minor figures but instead draws us into them.

Still, the sense of division that marked Anna from the beginning, expressed in the railroad worker who is split by the train, is here complete. As author of her own her life, she has written her story which she also obeys as if she had no choice. To every supposition she makes as a character another voice, also hers, cuts it down. Ultimately, although this voice is negative, it is not wrong to suggest that life will go on without her. In the chain of associations released in connection with Anna’s passing observations, Anna recalls something Vronsky once said when she recognizes her maid’s husband: “Наши паразиты ... Наши? Почему наши? [Our parasites. Ours? Why ours?] (9:376/757). From this new perspective, negative though it is, there is nothing natural about possession, particularly of other people. Anna empties herself of meaning so that she is no longer a thing that can, in principle, possess. What would it mean to acquire this knowledge in a positive light? Given the degree of intensity and the effect of these final scenes, this is a question which *Anna Karenina*, despite its return to the estate in part eight, seems to engage like its own unsettled dream.

Anna’s associations at the end of her plot in *Anna Karenina* recall the fundamental problems glimpsed (though tentatively resolved) in “Utro pomeshchika.” In this early work, I traced the features of novelistic subjectivity, rendering through point of view and established in encounters between a master and his serfs. Rather than stabilizing a dialectic into an opposition (although this also happens through suggestions of ‘life itself’ in romantic visions and secondary characters), Tolstoy’s narrative continues to build on its tensions. In the ongoing process of the subject’s creation and its annihilation, where identities are established as one thing and at times appear as their opposite, fixed answers (“this is it!”) and coherent subjects (those who feel themselves possessed of “the unquestionable meaning of the good”) never reside comfortably in the life which defines them—not only as a contrast (master and serf) but as their own material nature. Everything missing in the Bondsman is missing the Lord. In the peasant’s image, life seems to bend to its masters, but in fact, it permeates them.

The solution with which Levin’s plot ends returns us to the state in which Nekhliudov found himself at the conclusion of “Utro pomeshchika.” It is not the image of a woman, nor even marriage, that offers a space for the novelistic subject. It is, finally, the peasant, as it was for Nekhliudov in his quixotic beginning and remains in his enlightened end. Balancing social with supra-social reality, the peasant in Nekhliudov’s vision is an object of God and it is through him that we imagine devotion to a Lord to which we need not submit ourselves directly. Such is the dream of realism, unraveled in Anna’s line when fiction becomes only too real. Tolstoy’s peasant is a force of life without society. Like Levin, the Tolstoyan novel may be confident in the edifice of self-definition it has built within this medium. Yet it also seems to acknowledge—if only in the depths of its forms—that all the peasant has to do is return the gaze.

## Chapter 3

### The Voice of the People: Nikolai Nekrasov

#### *Introduction*

In 1855, realist writers were renewing the assault on romanticism; this was due to the spread of materialism, the view that the world is devoid of divine or immaterial essences. In the period known as the sixties, defined by relaxed censorship and heightened political energies, realism also becomes more programmatic, less a corrosive mission than a practical one. That mission, as many among the literary elite saw it, required writers to liberate themselves from the reflective habits that had been cultivated in romanticism and relinquish a vision of reality grounded in the ideals of an isolated individual. Once liberated, the elite would be prepared to fulfill their historical purpose. For once the intellectual saw reality clearly enough, he could see it better than anyone else – owing to his education and, more mystically, an innate capacity for reason. Even the “new men” (non-nobles), who generally criticized elitism, propounded this belief, claiming that rationality, like their historical mission, demanded self-sacrifice. It meant relinquishing an all-too-human attachment to the irrational: not just religious belief or romantic idealism, but uncontrollable desires and animalistic needs. The intellectual’s historical purpose had been the basis of cultural identity for some time, but in the sixties, tensions mount. In the wake of serfdom’s abolition in 1861, that purpose seemed close to fulfillment. Over the next decade, peasants became a topic of debate as the measure and fulcrum of societal change, while literature expressed and responded to the new demands placed upon it.

This chapter explores the materialist transformations of realism’s project in the poetry of Nikolai Nekrasov. After an initial volume of poetry, largely in imitation of romantic styles, Nekrasov debuts as the major poet of realism in 1856 with a volume whose popularity and success, some argue, render it among the most important works of the period. Standing at the center of change in literary society as editor of *The Contemporary*, the journal which would publish the major statements of materialism throughout the sixties, Nekrasov responded in his poetry to the movement’s claims. In his work in the 1850s, Nekrasov personifies the identity of the intellectual as committed to societal transformation and self-overcoming and shows that identity to depend on mediation: one acquired a voice by speaking for the other. Though Nekrasov’s poetry grapples with the new demands of realism, sharpened in the sixties, it also expresses curious inversions in the attempt to first establish a singular, rational self and then to escape it. Voice as a symbol for the peasant-other stood for a stable reality, but at other times, voice represents social forces that the poet channeled through himself. Here, it comes to represent a fractured and ineffectual subject who is aware of his own insignificance in comparison to a larger whole, but unable to overcome himself. Exploring voice as a poetic category that both establishes a subject and dissolves it, I argue that the peasant’s voice, mediated by the intellectual, establishes but cannot ultimately support a sense of self that was purposive and stable.

Behind the need to establish this “voice” were broader concerns about the nature of history that I locate in revaluations of poetry as form divorced from content. Because identity was configured in the cultural imagination as dependent on a historical mission, history, it was hoped, possessed a certain positive content symbolized by the voice of a totalized other. One emptied one’s own voice (or rather, found it in the first place) through the voice of that other,

and, in the process, escaped the fate of historical impermanence by dedicating oneself to a historical mission. The problem, as Nekrasov poetry's expresses it, is that self-emptying is possible only within the passage of the self into death, not its fulfillment in a stage beyond it. While materialism takes up the battle against negativity, Nekrasov develops a theme of fatalism in connection with his use of the peasant's image, transforming a conception of history into a series of never-ending forms. I locate this transformation in Nekrasov's *poema*, *Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho* [Who in Russia Can Live Well?] which was written over the course of the decade known as the sixties and extends into that period's dissolution, when pessimism began to overtake the cultural imaginary, and social anxieties heightened as political projects became increasingly radicalized. Set in the countryside, stylized on the basis of folklore, and preoccupied with themes of peasant life, Nekrasov's *poema* continues to build the conciliatory worlds promised by realism but also repeatedly unmakes them, exposing the act of creation as colored by interest and limited perspective. A singular voice fractures into many and develops the preoccupations of Nekrasov's early work, where the self cannot overcome its limits and, for the same reason, has no rational control over the movements of history that pass through it.

In what follows, I establish a framework for this reading of *Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho* by tracing two major threads in Nekrasov's poetry. One focuses on the cultural identity of the intellectual and the demands of self-sacrifice. Here, Nekrasov struggles to construct a self apart from and in relation to various "crowds," from a disinterested public to the *narod*, and develops a theme of fatalism as an aspect of the intellectual's historical mission. The other thread focuses on the voice of the peasant as a reality that emerges through mediation, contrast, and stylizations of folk language that locate peasant voice outside of history. I argue that although the peasant's voice contains irrationality – materiality in its fullest sense as the absence of reason – such containment often breaks down in Nekrasov's poetry. In the process, cultural categories of peasant and intellectual are inverted, and the material world opens out to include those who cannot overcome themselves and those who see no end to history except their own.

A few words on the cultural mood of the sixties surrounding, first, the intellectual and second, the peasant, will contextualize Nekrasov's engagement with these issues. One way to mitigate the burden of rationalism and self-sacrifice – and indeed to make it possible – was to understand rationality as aligned with the ego rather than opposed to it. Thus, by exercising reason and acting in one's self interest, one fulfilled the self-same task. To be self-interested was to be rational, and to pursue the healthiest, indeed most socially beneficial, course of action was to be self-interested. The struggle to gain access to reality as it was understood, in romanticism, as a non-material essence, would therefore seem to have been in vain. Still, the realists of the sixties framed reality as something of a new religion. Once the scales fell from one's eyes, one could know it profoundly. As for reality's missionaries, all they needed to do was to render themselves empty vessels so that, in their literature, reality's truth would emerge. Despite the shift to a positive view of the real, its representation remains negative in its demand for self-suppression. A trace of the irrational self was an indication of realism's failure – its obfuscation of reality rather than a necessary mediation of it.

Developing in parallel to these trends was an increasingly politicized view of the peasant. In 1858, Nikolai Dobroliubov outlines a demand, already familiar in nationalist discourses, that literature express *narodnost'*. Using the term to signify the peasantry, Dobroliubov challenges writers to give voice to the other. This challenge intensified in the coming years when a populist movement emerged, one divided in approach but unified in a vision of the peasant's voice. The mission of the intelligentsia found a specific object, whether to facilitate that voice or simply to listen to it. To do so, however, one needed to maintain one's rationality and recommit oneself to sacrifice. Rationality thus took on a new purpose to ensure continual self-emptying on the part of



the intellectual and, increasingly, to mitigate the irrational elements of society that had been displaced onto the peasantry. Because of peasantry's elevated status in realist ideology, a form of irrationality that was ascribed to it was, ipso facto, also valuable. For some, peasant irrationality fueled the energy which populists only had to politicize. Peasants did not need to filter their self-interest through reason in order to accommodate others, for their interests were the majority. Indeed, peasants constituted the real that others found so difficult to see. Though peasants could not see themselves, they also had no need to do so. It was their job to be irrational, the realists believed, and to embody the only kind of allowable irrationality: that which constituted the real rather than expressed it.

Despite the reassurance that, thanks to rationality, speaking as oneself entailed speaking for others, Dobroliubov's article from 1858, "O stepeni uchastiia narodnosti v razvitii russkoi literatury" [On the Degree of the Influence of Narodnost' in the Development of Russian Literature], gives vent to a persistent concern. On the one hand, the peasantry constitutes a whole to which individualized others offer themselves rationally. On the other, the educated elite sought to affirm a ground from which to speak a voice that was more coherent than their own: "Мы можем держаться только потому, что под нами есть твердая почва — настоящий русский народ; а сами по себе мы составляем совершенно неприметную частичку великого русского народа" [We can hold our ground only because beneath us there is a strong foundation: the real Russian *narod*. In ourselves, we consist of an absolutely miniscule part of the great Russian people].<sup>314</sup>

Recognizing oneself to be insignificant is key to the world-view ascribed to the peasant as Gleb Uspensky would recapitulate the stereotype in 1882: «Жизнь его, как отдельная жизнь, не имеет смысла.» Эта, не имеющая смысла, жизнь, не любя никого отдельно, ни себя, ни других, годна на все, с чем сталкивает жизнь...» [This life, having no sense, loving no one separately, not itself, not others, is suited to anything that life brings...].<sup>315</sup> In contrast, Dobroliubov cannot rest easy in claiming the individual's constitutive insignificance. For Dobroliubov as for the rest of his generation, one admits to one's own nothingness only with the assurance of compensation: historical fame, purpose, stability. What emerges most forcefully is the hope that history is teleological and, despite the claims of materialism to the contrary, that it houses some ultimate, essential meaning. In connection to the peasant as the bearer of wholeness in the form of their own historical narrative, the intelligentsia, "miniscule little pieces" though they were, could transform their own particularity into purpose. Meanwhile, the peasant was left to contain the much more challenging implications of partiality, namely, that it promises no reward for its recognition. In this framework, irrationality bespeaks a certain truth, one near to the materialism that realists in the sixties promoted, but without a promise of stability that in fact defined it: there is no content without form, no reason behind form, and no end to the passage of one form to another. By attempting to capture reality in the only place it could suggest itself as content, that is, in moments of transition, Nekrasov's poetry challenges the demands it nevertheless also helped to create.

In section one, "The Poet and his Crowds," I trace Nekrasov's efforts to develop a lyric subject in relation to the various "crowds" for whom the poet is tasked to speak. While his two major statements on poetry, "Blazhen nezlobivyi poet" and "Poet i grazhdanin" articulate the principle of self-sacrifice, they also perform subtle mergers of poet and crowd that challenge that principle. "Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod"ezda" [Meditations at the Entry Hall] positions the

<sup>314</sup> Nikolai Dobroliubov, *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*, ed. by B. I. Bursov (Moskva/Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1962), vol. 2, p. 257. Subsequent citations of Dobroliubov's *SS* will appear parenthetically in the text, by volume and page number.

<sup>315</sup> Uspenskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, p. 119.

peasant as the poet's new crowd and the quintessential other for whom the poet must speak. By comparing this poem to "Poslednie elegii" [Last Elegies] (1855) on the basis of a shared theme of death, configured in both poems as a privileged state of knowledge, I show how this theme is concretized as a reflection on history. In section two, "Language Beyond History: Folk Stylizations," I address the second major thread of Nekrasov's poetry, outlined above, as a peasant voice that offered a natural basis for language. Contextualizing these stylizations in cultural discourses about folk language, I show how the naturalization of language is imagined and ultimately undermined in "Zelenyi shum" [Green Noise] (1862) and "Korobeiniki" [The Peddlars] (1861). Finally, I bring these threads together in section three, "Voice(s) in *Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho*," arguing that devices of poetry and storytelling establish one of the *poema*'s major impulses, that is, to dissolve the end of history into a series of forms, while the continued presence of "voice" establishes another. As a metaphor for reality, "voice" returns throughout *Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho* to reconstitute history as something possessed of content, and with it, the identities that define themselves in reference to a historical mission.

### I. *The Poet and his Crowds*

In this period, the peasant's irrationality and the intellectual's rationality are bound together in conceptions of art and language. In the romantic aesthetic theory that defined the early nineteenth century, prose had been correlated with the rabble, a mass of ordinary people defined by their ordinariness. By contrast, the word poetry, considered the highest form of art, was used to refer to literature as such and to designate artistic value. Though under attack in the sixties, poetry's elitism nevertheless survives into the intellectual's rationality, sharing with the older configuration a reflective capacity, whether innate or cultivated, that was believed to be absent among the rabble. For example, in his 1855 treatise, "Esteticheskie otnosheniia iskusstva k deistvitel'nost'" [Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality], Chernyshevsky uses poetry to signify literature in general, giving it pride of place among the arts for its capacity to describe and judge reality with an appropriate amount of didacticism. For Chernyshevsky, art's only function was to deliver reality to those who could not see it, but this remained a role for which the educated observer was best suited.<sup>316</sup>

The aesthetic theory with which Chernyshevsky polemicizes, that of Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*, privileges poetry for its proximity to the abstractions of the mind or spirit, the result

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<sup>316</sup> Nikolai Chernyshevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v piatnadsati tomakh*, ed. by V. Ia. Kirpotin and B. P. Koz'min (Moskva, Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR 1939-1953). The conclusion of Chernyshevsky's treatise is striking in its insistence on reflective capacity, one that seems to undermine the radical materialism he intended to promote: "Но если человек, в котором умственная деятельность сильно возбуждена вопросами, порождаемыми наблюдением жизни, одарен художническим талантом, то в его произведениях, сознательно или бессознательно, выразится стремление произнести живой приговор о явлениях, интересующих его (и его современников, потому что *мыслящий человек не может мыслить над ничтожными вопросами, никому, кроме него, не интересными*), будут предложены или разрешены вопросы, возникающие из жизни для мыслящего человека; его произведения будут, чтобы так выразиться, сочинениями на темы, предлагаемые жизнью" (*italics added*) (1:86). [But if a person in whom mental activity is strongly awakened by questions arising from the observation of life, and who is gifted with artistic talent, then his works, consciously or unconsciously, will express the impulse to pronounce sharp judgment on those phenomena that interest him (and his contemporaries, *for a thinking man does not contemplate trifling questions which are of interest to no one but himself*); questions arising from the life of a thinking man will be posed and resolved; his works will be, so to say, studies of themes offered to him by life.]

of its basis in language.<sup>317</sup> Far from Chernyshevsky's materialism, these ideas nevertheless resurface in his own elevation of rational judgment. In 1858, Dobroliubov uses the term "literature" rather than "poetry" as his object of focus, but he is still concerned to maintain the essential promise of the art form, attributed to one and now the other, of reflective distance. Widening the scope of poetic perspective to other discursive genres, Dobroliubov celebrates narrative representation for its mediating function: "В литературном изложении пыл первого увлечения непременно сглаживается, и место его необходимо заступает спокойная обдуманность, хладнокровное соображение мнений разных сторон и вывод строго логический, свободный от впечатлений минуты" [In literary exposition, the dust of passion necessarily settles and a calm deliberation, a cool-headed consideration of opinions from all sides, a strictly logical conclusion, free from the impressions of a moment, necessarily takes its place] (2:222). With prose as in poetry, the writer diffused himself into a greater whole and thereby gave it expression.

As evidenced in these texts, literature was, in a sense, still synonymous with poetry for its role was evaluative, whereas the prosaic continued to stand for something like the rabble but acquired a positive valence. In romantic aesthetics and in early Russian realism, reality was defined in reference to the dissolution of ideals. It was not a far leap to ground that sense of reality in those social forms supposed to lack the projection of higher ideals in their boundedness to "cycles of life, death, and reproduction."<sup>318</sup> Though devoted to the crowd, realist literature was still tasked to rise above it.

Poets like Nekrasov faced conflicting demands. One had to undermine oneself, profess one's own insignificance before the real, and simultaneously produce that real through one's perspective. Despite the apparent revolution in aesthetics, conceptions of reality as the domain of an unreflective crowd are not dislodged, even as they acquire new layers of meaning. For realists, the poet was not to ignore the crowd but rather to give it voice, though to do so, he must still maintain his rational distance, an alienating but legitimizing state of being. Only by devotion to an imagined whole, comprised of those who do not see beyond themselves, is that whole possible to conceptualize in the first place. The two incommensurate components of art and society made possible their mutual purpose.

Nekrasov's poetry of the 1850s expresses and confronts an implicit paradox: the poet as an insignificant "miniscule piece" has something in common with the rabble, albeit only in collaboration. In their mission to overcome themselves, however, Nekrasov's speakers admit to their own irrationality. They ought to exhibit, indeed be equal to, the act of overcoming, but are more often that which must be (but is usually not) overcome. Configured in Nekrasov's work through a range of lyric subjects, the poet ought to give voice to the other – that higher ideal that now bears the name of the peasant and the real – yet consistently gives voice only to himself.

In the beginning of the period known as the sixties, when political energies were renewed and literary society was dramatically changing, Nekrasov's poetry expressed the tensions of mid-

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<sup>317</sup> Hegel's Lectures were delivered between 1818 and 1819 and published from student notes in 1842. Chernyshevsky read the *Aesthetics* in 1848. D. I. Chizhevskii, *Gegel' v Rossii*, (Paris: Dom knigi, 1939), pp. 262-3. As is well known, Chernyshevsky was most heavily influenced by Ludwig Feuerbach, applying the tenets of Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), to aesthetic theory. Andrzej Walicki, *History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. by Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1979), p. 193.

<sup>318</sup> For example, Hegel discusses "the prose of the world" as a "realm of vital interests." *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 1, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 150. I take the formulation "cycles of life, death, and reproduction" from Jacques Rancière, "The Thread of the Novel," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 47:2 (2014), 198.

century realism in its complex evolution. Nekrasov came of age under the tutelage of Belinsky, who theorized the principles of early realism and was the first to declare a shift from a negative to a positive conception of the real. In 1836, praising the work of Gogol, Belinsky claims to resurrect reality by supplanting its old meaning as the wall against which hopes crash with a more optimistic, “mature” view:

...у всякого младенчествуящего народа, как и у младенчествуящего человека, жизнь всегда враждует с действительностию. Истина жизни недоступна ни для того, ни для другого; ее высокая простота и естественность непонятна для его ума, неудовлетворительна для его чувства. То, что для народа возмужалого, как и для человека возмужалого, кажется торжеством бытия и высочайшею поэзиею, для него было бы горьким, безотрадным разочарованием, после которого уже незачем и не для чего жить.<sup>319</sup>

The key to mature realism, Belinsky suggests, is to understand that reality does not antagonize life but fulfills it. In these terms, the old meaning of reality is synonymous with life’s primary antagonist, death, and, given the broader cultural discourse in which Belinsky writes, a fatalistic world-view associated with the pre-modern past as well as a peasantry who were thought to preserve it. Realism’s task was thus to overcome the negativity associated, first, with peasant fatalism and, second, with the satirical energies epitomized by Gogol. In this essay, Belinsky is at pains to show that Gogol criticizes reality not because it is inherently miserable, but because it stands to be transformed.

Under the auspices of Belinsky’s critical evaluations and theorizations, early realism elevated the work of Gogol as its ideal. These influences are evident in Nekrasov’s first major poetic statement, “Blazhen nezlobivyi poet” [Blessed is the Unmalicious Poet] (1852), which introduces themes elaborated in the more famous “Poet i grazhdanin” [Poet and Citizen] (1856). Written on the occasion of Gogol’s death, “Blazhen nezlobivyi poet” meditates on self-censure. The satirical poet, emblemized by Gogol, sacrifices himself in a negative relationship to reality, which is here synonymous with the crowd, a topos Russian poetry since Pushkin’s “Poet i tolpa,” [The Poet and the Crowd] 1838. Following Pushkin’s model, the crowd of “Blazhen nezlobivyi poet” is a reading public capable of praising or ostracizing the poet. By criticizing this public, the poet criticizes reality. As for the poet, only after his own transformation into a corpse is his love for the crowd, and by extension reality, made apparent: “Со всех сторон его клянут / И, только труп его увидя, / Как много сделал он, поймут, / И как любил он — ненавидя!”<sup>320</sup> Although the realist poet devotes himself to reality rather than the ideals that are divorced from it, his service to (and even participation in) reality are not his to enjoy.

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<sup>319</sup> Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1, p. 259. [... for any nation in its infancy, as for any young person, life is always in conflict with reality. The truth of life is as inaccessible to one as it is to the other; its lofty simplicity and naturalness is incomprehensible to the young person’s mind, unsatisfying to his feeling. That which to the mature nation as to the mature person seems an exultation of life and the highest poetry, for him would seem bitter, dismal disappointment, after which there would be no reason to live.]

<sup>320</sup> Nikolai Nekrasov, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh* (Moscow, Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR 1965), vol 1., p. 128. Subsequent citations to Nekrasov’s *SS* will appear parenthetically in the text, by volume and page number. [From all sides he they curse him / Only in seeing his corpse / They understand / How he loved while hating.]

As much as Nekrasov made satire central to his poetry, a stance associated with sincerity comes to dominate much of his work.<sup>321</sup> The sincere poet, unlike the maligned satirist, demands recognition. “Blazhen nezlobivyi poet” contains the duality, enjoying “the murmur of praise” as well as “wild shouts of animosity” (1:128). Praising the poet who suppresses himself is as close as the speaker of “Blazhen nezlobivyi poet” will come to suppressing his own voice; his words are a double-negation through which he gives voice to himself. Unlike the poet who is mourned, the poet who speaks in “Blazhen nezlobivyi poet” will not wait for death to make his attachments known. In his attachment to reality, that is, the praise of the crowd and his place among them, this poet blocks a wider view of its potential transformations.

Studies of poetic voice would tend to support the view that poetic expression is uniquely individual and thus a fitting medium for this speaker’s reclamation of his place in the public and need to be recognized. Käte Hamburger, for example, posits the statement subject in poetry or the “I-origio,” as its distinguishing feature, arguing that a poetic statement is best understood as originating in a single subject rather than through dramatic mediation.<sup>322</sup> Poetic statements thus function like statements made in the real world, whereas narrative genres construct statements spoken by others. Hamburger’s theory finds echoes across influential paradigms, including those which build on J. S. Mill’s famous statement that poetry is “overheard.” According to Jonathan Culler, these assumptions about poetry lead interpreters to reconstruct the private conversation of a poet who is addressing an absent or inanimate object or else to imagine a dramatic monologue whereby we shift our conception of the speaker from autobiographical person to a character in a narrative of which we are only given a piece.<sup>323</sup> Within this framework, the speaker of “Blazhen nezlobivyi poet” emerges from behind his many statements demanding to be reconstructed from them. He is not a corpse, but a living entity expressed in the words which are his.

Rather than claiming such expressivity to be a constitutive feature of poetry, I suggest that it manifests a historical need. Herbert Tucker and Anne Janowitz have suggested that an unencumbered, absolutely self-sufficient and coherent subject was not a starting point for poets throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>324</sup> Rather, attempts to create this subject suggest that it was a form lacking in social-historical experience.<sup>325</sup> In Nekrasov’s case, this need is expressed as sincerity: the unabashed revelations of the poet’s relationship to his world, as N. N. Ivanova phrases it.<sup>326</sup> However, even the sincere poet is not self-sufficient, expressing not only himself but also those who share his habits. The expression of this diffuse subjectivity can be correlated with what Culler has proposed to call “voicing,” poetry’s ability to effect listeners in direct ways. In the distinction, two competing impulses are generated within stylizations of voice: a central speaker who stands apart from the crowd, and a speaker who cannot separate himself from it.

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<sup>321</sup> For Nekrasov’s use of satire, see Erik McDonald, “Russia’s Juvenal or Russia’s Horace? Nekrasov’s Satirical Personae,” *Russian Review*, vol. 67, no. 4 (2008), pp. 597-621.

<sup>322</sup> Käte Hamburger, *Logic of Literature* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 74.

<sup>323</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 34. “Rather than imagine that lyrics embody voices, we do better to say that they create effects of voicing, of aurality ... as in the echoing of rhyme, assonance, or alliteration, and rhythmic patterning.”

<sup>324</sup> Herber Tucker, “Dramatic Monologue and Overhearing the Lyric” in *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*, ed. by Chaviva Hošek and Patricia Parker (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 226-243.

<sup>325</sup> Theodor Adorno proposes such an interpretative model in “On Lyric Poetry and Society” in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. by Shierry Weber Nichol森 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 37-54.

<sup>326</sup> N. N. Ivanova, “Traditsii stikhotvornogo rechi v lirike Nekrasova” in *Iazyk liriki XIX veka: Pushkin, Nekrasov*, ed. by A. D. Grigor’eva and N. N. Ivanova (Moskva: Nauka, 1981), p. 240.

In a reversal of common assumptions about the educated elite's distance from what Belinsky described as a pre-modern view of reality, fatalism appears in Nekrasov's work as ingrained in the demand for self-sacrifice. In a letter to Tolstoy from 1855, Nekrasov interprets the aesthetic revolution proposed by Chernyshevsky within the more familiar framework of early realism as he expressed it in "Blazhen nezlobivyi poet." Defending Chernyshevsky's treatise, Nekrasov suggests that critical attacks against society bespeak a deeper positivity and that it also depends, he clarifies, depends on the sincerity behind the critique: "Гнусно притворяться злым, но я стал бы на колени перед человеком, который лопнул бы от искренней злости, у нас ли мало к ней поводов?" [It is base to pretend to be enraged, but I would fall on my knees before the person who would burst from sincere rage. And we have no few occasions for it, do we not?].<sup>327</sup> Even in the alienation of self-sacrifice, Nekrasov finds a warrant for self-expression.

In another letter to Tolstoy, Nekrasov clarifies his preference for sincerity above satire, maintaining that one ought not to seek the praise of others, a value that is elaborated in "Blazhen nezlobivyi poet," but also suggesting that the sincere poet admits to what he loves, not only what he hates:

Вот какая пришла мне мысль. Рутинa лицемерия и рутинa иронии губят в нас простоту и откровенность. Вам, верно случалось, говоря или пиша, беспрестанно думать: не смеется ли слушатель? Так что ж? Надо давать пинка этой мысли каждый раз, как она явиться. Все это мелочное самолюбие.<sup>328</sup>

Self-love (*samolyubie*) is here associated not with speaking for oneself but remaining silent. In a sense, the values attributed to the satirical poet are retained; speaking boldly, one might one day be vindicated, though perhaps not in one's own lifetime. Rather than positing certain truths to which the rest of the world remains blind, however, Nekrasov insists on the gesture of speaking, regardless of the content. Indeed, in much of his poetry, sincerity brings forth not prophecies but confessions. As Mikhail Makeev writes of Nekrasov's poetry and as seems evidenced in "Blazhen nezlobivyi poet," one might attempt to hate what one loves—from gentry habits to the society that produced them—but can never honestly succeed.<sup>329</sup>

Mill's formula about "overheard poetry" is here reversed: the poet himself hears the laughing crowd but continues to speak. His forum is public but he speaks over its din. In so doing, the sincere poet also speaks the voice of the crowd; their vices become his own.<sup>330</sup> The difference between the poet and the crowd is the former's sincerity, but this only enables him to give voice to what others will not. Nekrasov thus transforms the cultural demand of self-sacrifice that had been established on the basis of rationalism, into expressivity – not of the self per se, but

<sup>327</sup> Quoted in Makeev, Mikhail. *Nikolai Nekrasov* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2017), p. 230.

<sup>328</sup> *ibid.*, 248. [Then a thought came to me. The habit of dissemblance and the habit of irony destroy the simplicity and frankness in us. It has probably happened to you that, speaking or writing, you endlessly think: will the audience not laugh? And what of it? One must expel such thoughts every time they appear. It's all the most trifling vanity.]

<sup>329</sup> *ibid.*, 112-115.

<sup>330</sup> Kornei Chukovsky cites a telling statement, with regards to sincerity, quoted from a witness to the infamous Murav'ev affair, in which Nekrasov flatters the official M. N. Murav'ev with a poem he reads aloud to him in an attempt to gain his favor. Murav'ev was terrorizing writers with arrests and journals with closures in the wake of the attempt on Alexander II's life in 1866, but many saw Nekrasov's flattery as a betrayal of the intelligentsia's values. Nekrasov responds to one interlocuter: "I only said what everyone else was thinking and did what anyone else would do." *Poet i palach: Nekrasov i Murav'ev* (St. Petersburg: Epokha, 1922), p. 28.

of the culture that shapes it. With this radically diffuse subject, one that nevertheless declares “I” in those discourses that would deny it, Nekrasov smuggles self-expressivity into the demands of realist representation. From a wide, hopeful perspective on history, Nekrasov focuses on the moment, and the miniscule particular, that is destined to fade away. Instead of overhearing the poet’s private conversation, we might just as easily be drawn into it.<sup>331</sup>

“Poet i grazhdanin” is considered a declaration of realist aesthetics that is often read in parallel with Chernshevsky’s treatise of 1855, yet the poem also builds on the tensions of sincerity and satire that were established in “Blazhen nezlobivyi poet.” In this poetic dialogue, the speaker known as the poet assumes the stance of a satirist, who attaches himself to nothing, whereas the citizen enjoins the poet to satirize the public with a view toward its transformation, betraying a clear attachment to that cause. Different versions of satire, one negative and one positive, thus compete. The citizen’s vision champions satire on the condition that it produce a longed-for utopia. By contrast, the poet’s vision of satire is self-directed, evidenced in his response to the citizen’s initial insults: “Прибавь: хандрит и еле дышит – / И будет мой портрет готов” [You forgot to add: he has the spleen and barely breathes] (1:255). At the end of the poem, when the citizen fades into the background, these two figures are revealed as conflicting aspects of the self-same poet.

Because it is the citizen who fades, the positive transformation of reality appears to be couched in the terms of self-condemnation proposed by the poet. Taking on the role of the crowd, the poet hurls insults at himself: “И рад я, если кто-нибудь / В меня с презреньем бросит камень” [I am glad if someone / Throws a stone at me with contempt] (1:262). Indeed, he has rendered his own unseemly portrait all along (“You forgot to add...”). The poet’s opponent has changed significantly from “Blazhen nezlobivyi poet” and both poems respond to the initial prototype of the crowd in Pushkin’s “Poet i tolpa”: “Молчи, бессмысленный народ! / Поденщик, раб нужды, забот!” [Silence, thoughtless mob! Day-laborer, slave of privation and worry].<sup>332</sup> In another transformation of Pushkin’s prototype, only “the slave of privation,” not the one who rises above it, be he poet or citizen, is able to speak. We do not hear the poems from that time when, we are told, the poet attempted to abide by the demands of the citizen; we only hear of his failure. It is this failure that produces the poem we have before us, ending on a long monologue that overwhelms the dialogue and absorbs those voices into itself. The only trace of the poet-citizen are allusions to “curses and groans,” sounds that contrast the words that pour forth from the failure that replaces them. Meanwhile, though the citizen is able to “see” reality, he cannot speak of it:

Гроза шумит и к бездне гонит  
Свободы шаткую ладью,  
Поэт клянет или хоть стонет,  
А гражданин молчит и клонит  
Под иго голову свою (1:258).<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> The tendency to contain the confessional, diffuse expressivity of Nekrasov’s poetry is evidenced in the cultural myth of Nekrasov, explored by Konstantin Klioutchkine, “Between Sacrifice and Indulgence: Nikolai Nekrasov as a Model for the Intelligentsia,” *Slavic Review*, vol. 66, no. 1 (2007), pp. 45-62.

<sup>332</sup> Alexander Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo akademii nauk SSSR, 1995), vol. 3, p. 141. [Silence, thoughtless mob! Day-laborer, slave of privation and worry!]

<sup>333</sup> [A storm rages and chases toward the abyss / the quaking ship of freedom / The poet curses or at least laments / But the citizen is silent and bows / His head under the yoke]

A truly self-emptied subject and, with him, a potentially coherent reality, appears like a chimera in the illusion of the citizen. He is a by-product of the collision of self-indulgence and critique, ultimately dissipating back into them.

As I have already suggested, the peasant replaces the citizen as a much more potent illusion of a self-emptied reality, configuring the object rather than the agent of self-sacrifice. In so doing, the peasant maintains the promise of potentiality but simultaneously creates a place of irrationality, for their needs are legitimate and their expressivity warranted. In “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda,” the problem of the crowd continues to unfold, whereby a certain figure “does not want to know reality,” as Dobroliubov might have phrased it.<sup>334</sup> In “Blazhen nezlobivyi poet,” this figure takes the form of an ungrateful readership; in “Poet i grazhdanin,” it is the narrowly self-interested poet. In “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda” it is a high official who refuses to grant an audience to peasant petitioners. In this poem, two crowd come into play. The figures listed above configure its negative form as the failure to recognize genius and welcome change, the narrow interests of the individual, and the delusions of power. The other crowd is brought into being peasant petitioners, who distinguish themselves by the fact of their suppression and, in the process, give new voice to the groan, described but not elaborated, of the poet-citizen.

“Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda” begins by setting the stage of the occasion for the speaker’s reflections: the arrival of peasants from the countryside to a certain high official’s residence in St. Petersburg, where they intend to lodge complaints.<sup>335</sup> Without messengers of their own or the ability to write, the peasant visitors can only cry (*prositeli plachut*) (1:301). This is just what the poem’s speaker needs: misery without expression.

After describing the scene at the entrance from a distance (*raz ia videl* [once I saw]), the speaker of the poem involves himself in an exchange with the high official. As commentators note, transitions from distant observation to active involvement in a scene are common for Nekrasov’s lyric subjects. Boris Korman describes such transitions as the result of poetic elements interacting with narration. When narrative tendencies dominate, “the lyric subject is no longer subject and object (he does not speak about himself) but appears instead indirectly through the stories of others.”<sup>336</sup> When those of lyric take over, the speaker cannot be indifferent to the world he depicts, reflecting on that world as it relates to him. Ivanova finds a similar device effecting lexical usage in Nekrasov’s poetry in the tendency to shift from metaphorical to literal meaning.<sup>337</sup> Here, abstract usages are rendered as concrete objects that impact the speaker in his immediate context, evoking a concrete situation full of objects and contingencies.<sup>338</sup> These dueling tendencies to pull poetic statements into narrative or else depart narrative into poetic statement are unified by what Ivanova describes as Nekrasov’s compulsion to “make things personal.”<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Dobroliubov writes in his article from 1858 that poets before realism could not speak of the rabble without contempt because they “did not want to know reality” (2:253).

<sup>335</sup> The peasantry’s exclusion from public discourse is underscored by the evident need for literacy inscribed in the palace’s entrance: visitors write their names on a list and notes are carried to and from the residence by a legion of messengers. Lodging complaints to patrons was the only judicial mechanism available to peasants under serfdom.

<sup>336</sup> B.O. Korman, *Lirika Nekrasova* (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 1978), p. 118.

<sup>337</sup> N. N. Ivanova, “Traditsii stikhotvornogo rechi v lirike Nekrasova” p. 265.

<sup>338</sup> For effects of spatio-temporal contextualization in lyric poetry, see Ginzburg, “Chastnoe i obshchee v liricheskom stikhotvorenii” in *Literatura v poiskakh real’nosti*, pp. 87-114.

<sup>339</sup> Ivanova, “Traditsii stikhotvornogo rechi v lirike Nekrasova,” p. 240.



In “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda,” the speaker is able to “make things personal” without revealing his own investments; he speaks on behalf of the silenced petitioners. Forcing himself into an audience with the high official in their place, the speaker transforms the varied petitions into a single, abstract, and depersonalized noun: *narodnoe blago* [peasant well-being] (1:302). He then wedges himself into their cause by complaining that the official neglects peasant well-being just as he maligns the “scribblers” (much like himself) who speak on their behalf. In a careful transformation from the petitioners’ interests to his own, the speaker begins his direct address to the official by echoing their scant words. “Dopusti!” [Let us in!] is the first utterance of the petitioners, their second and last responding to the official’s refusal to admit them: “Sudi ego bog!” [Let God judge him!]. In line forty-six, the speaker begins his address by reiterating the petitioners’ injunction to admit them (“Voroti ikh!” [Call them back!]) as well as the threat of God’s judgment: “Ne strashat tebia gromy nebesnye” [Heavenly thunder does not frighten you] (1:302). Staking his claim on the grounds of the peasants’ petitions, the speaker launches into his poem.

In the shift from third- to first- person, a speaking situation is created from a narrative scenario. That situation layers the present, open-ended temporality of poetic statement atop the event of the petitioners’ departure. The shift allows the speaker to overcome the official barriers of the entrance hall and speak as if he were within it. This would seem to give him a unique form of freedom, yet the open-ended nature of his expression implies that even he may be the recipient of his own address: “Что тебе эта скорбь вопиющая / Что тебе этот бедный народ? / Вечным праздником быстро бегущая / Жизнь очнуться тебе не дает” [But what does this desperate sorrow mean / What do you care for the impoverished people? / Life passes quickly in endless diversion / Keeping you from awakening] (1:302).

The elision of verbs in the first two lines leave the spatio-temporal specificity of the scenario all the more undetermined. In the second two lines, we have been prepared to take these sentiments in their broadest applicability without losing sight of the narrative that provoked them. Holding the tensions between the narrative scenario and the meditation and personalization it provokes, the poem’s speaker only remains innocent of these admonishments as long as he directs them toward someone else. The ease with which one might become oblivious to life is especially palpable. Reality may pass by unrecognized until one of its privileged observers points us toward it. This form of the real, it would seem, can only emerge as an admonition.

Reality’s conditions are thus revealed: it must result from critique, and it must remain potential. *Narodnoe blago* acquires a voice: the repeated groan [*ston*] that produces a series of “o” sounds from its own internal energies. “Стонет он по полям, по дорогам / Стонет он по тюрьмам, по острогам” [In the fields they moan and along the road / They moan in the prisons and jails] (1:303). The transformation from petition to groan and finally elongated vowel traces a passage from sense to sound. The refrain *stonet on* [it groans] seems to merge the subject (*on*) into its act (*stonet*) so that the act becomes self-sufficient and its subject, passive. The peasant’s groan has no single attribution, yet it maps a world of spatial dimensions (along the field, along the road). It is thus concrete, both in its sound, the physical form of language, and in its ability to be localized even as it remains elusive and abstract. This sound belongs to no one but the poet who hears it and gives it voice. Ultimately, however, a reality that is constituted by the peasant’s groan collapses into something of a tautology: “Где народ, там и стон...Эх, сердечный!” [Wherever the peasant is, there is groaning...Oh, poor dear!] (1:304).

In “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda,” we witness a new form of poetic inspiration taking place and a new lyric subject born within it. That subject’s muse, developing themes from “Poet i grazhdanin,” is the immiserated peasant, now the concrete form of what in the earlier poem were “storms” of indistinct need. The poet has created his muse as a double-negation: he is

not (for a time) the crowd in the form of the high official who loses himself in diversion and “forgets about life,” nor is he the peasant who makes sound but not poetry:

Что же значит твой стон бесконечный?  
Ты проснешься ль, исполненный сил,  
Иль, судеб повинуюсь закону,  
Всё, что мог, ты уже совершил,-  
Создал песню, подобную стону,  
И духовно навеки почил?..(1:304).<sup>340</sup>

The peasant’s groan is only poetic potentiality, “a song like a groan,” and it comes to a dead-end. The nation’s expanse has been mapped and an elongated vowel drawn out as far as it will go. As for the poet, the productive tension generated by waking up to a uniquely “real” reality settles into routine of the day. To maintain the tension, the poet must find it elsewhere, and so he addresses now the peasant, a singular subject brought into being by the sound that filled the place of the dismissed petitioners. Now, however, the petitioners’ spirit must also be dismissed.

The poet has divested all he can from himself, and the sounds of a self-emptied reality have also run their course. In the death of the peasant, the double-silencing of the petitioners and the “already completed” groan, the poet awaits his rebirth. Indeed, he has already made the groan that resembles a song into one in the present poem, and it would therefore seem that he has already born witness to and even preempted the peasant’s death. Though the poem ends on a note of anticipation, its pathos is elegiac. Reality is caught in the rear-view just as it was initially brought to bear as an admonition. In both cases, reality emerges as an effect generated in the passage between sound and meaning. In that transition, the poem locates itself

Here, then, is one version of poetic voice, singular and contained. Peasant voice creates the outlines of a coherent subject, emptied of content but stable in form – a bulwark against the diffusion generated by self-critique and self-indulgence. In this way, that voice is illuminated by the abstraction of Voice as Jacques Derrida has described it: the metaphysical core that was thought to lie within language’s origin.<sup>341</sup> In “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda,” voice comes to stand for a unified entity which can never be accessed in itself but serves as the basis for expression. As the basis of a language that will inevitably stifle it, voice, unfettered and primal, describes the modern self’s condition as existing in opposition to what it is. Given these implications, it is fitting that the peasant serves such a function. In voice, reality is made other.

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<sup>340</sup> [What does your endless groan mean? / Are you awakening, full of strength? / Or submitting to the laws of fate / Have you done all you can / Created a groan like a song / And laid yourself to rest forever?]

<sup>341</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 75-6. Since Derrida’s elaboration in the 1960s of this notion of voice, Giorgio Agamben has argued, along similar lines, that western philosophy elevates the core of language to “the unspeakable experience of Voice,” which, like Derrida, he views as a construct of otherness. Agamben’s position is that scholarship in the wake of Derrida often ends up contributing its own version of “the unsayable” by valorizing language’s endless deferment. Instead, Agamben suggests acknowledging that there is no final secret to be found before or within language, and that absence is only a blank page waiting to be filled rather than a mark of the past or the future. *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, trans. Karen E. Pinkus, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 25. For a recent engagement with the concept, see Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. by Paul A. Kottman (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2005).

By the end of “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda,” the poet, mourning a lost voice, performs an inversion of what Peter Sacks describes as typical of the work of mourning that is performed by elegiac poetry. According to Sacks, language fills the gap of the lost object and is itself a mark of loss.<sup>342</sup> Elegiac language is thus compensatory, constituted by sounds that fill a void and divisions that abound where unity once existed. In “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda,” however, the poet’s language marks the loss of the peasant’s language. Language is traded for language. Thus, while the poet’s voice threatens to fracture, the peasant’s voice remains coherent, if only in its potentiality. The loss of one voice enables a backward projection of the coherence of *any* voice, and it is this construct to which the poet attaches himself and his poem, departing at just the moment at which he is left to speak for himself.

In this poem, the peasant’s voice establishes the outlines of an unencumbered self while the poet decenters and dissolves them. Self-critique breaks down the walls of the singular subject, opening it toward the social order for which it speaks. By contrast, the peasant’s voice symbolizes singular expression, mediated by the poet who couches himself within it. Mediation is essential, yet the new form of the crowd has the same quality as the old. The former is blindingly self-involved, but so is the latter, expressing its vital needs in vocalic cries. The peasant’s nearness to death, effected by the speaker’s retroactive longing, also brings him close to self-involved speakers.<sup>343</sup> Always on the brink of death, the peasant in “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda” moans for himself, drawing out the experience of death into an entire lifetime so that his voice can objectify it.

Although, in a sense, death silences the petitioners of “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda,” it thus also lets them make the sound which the poet needs in order to speak. By grounding Nekrasov’s speakers in a promised unity but enabling unrestrained self-expression, death provides the material for their poetry. “Poslednie elegii” illuminates the leitmotif of death in Nekrasov’s poetry, elaborated by Kornei Chukovsky, and shows how it collides with the peasant’s image.<sup>344</sup> Written at a time when the perpetually ill Nekrasov feared imminent death, these three short lyrics develop reflections on the self’s insignificance. In “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda,” life appears as a task from which we might be diverted, but in “Poslednie elegii,” it is synonymous with (and celebratory of) those diversions, even the irrational and the self-seeking.

The first of the elegies begins with an exoneration of the habits that brought death upon the speaker:

Привычки, прежде милые, постыли,  
И горек дым сигары. Решено!  
Не ты горька, любимая подруга  
Ночных трудов и одиноких дум,—  
Мой жребий горек. Жадного недуга  
Я не избег (1:156).<sup>345</sup>

<sup>342</sup> Peter Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats*, (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 8-17.

<sup>343</sup> Cf. “V Derevne” [In the Village] (1854) “Плачет старуха. А мне что за дело? / Что и жалеть, коли нечем помочь?.. / Слабо мое изнуренное тело / Время ко сну.” [The old woman cries. But what’s it to me? / What is it to pity if nothing can be done? / My broken body is weak / It’s time for sleep] (1:129).

<sup>344</sup> Chukovsky, *Nekrasov: Stat’i i materialy* (Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo Kubuch, 1926), pp. 117-9.

<sup>345</sup> “My habits, formerly sweet, lost their appeal/ And the smoke of my cigar is bitter. It is settled! / Not you are bitter, my beloved friend / Of nightly labors and of lonely thoughts. / My fate is bitter. A greedy ailment / I have not failed to evade.] Trans. by Klioutchkine, “Between Sacrifice and Indulgence,” p. 47.

Near to death, the body loses traction with the sensory world: Теперь поменьше мелочных забот / И реже в дверь мою стучится голод [Now my petty cares are fewerer/ And rarely does hunger knock at my door] (ibid). In this self-emptying, the speaker seems to have achieved what is demanded of him: the acquisition of total knowledge: “Я вижу все...А рано смерть идет” [I see it all... / But death approaches] (1:156). It is not in absolute knowledge but the slight space of the conjunction, “but,” that this speaker locates himself. Only the shift between “knowing reality” and leaving it produces knowledge in the first place. In “Razmyshleniia,” peasants constituted reality because they depart it or else cannot remain in view once observers are overwhelmed by the diversions of their own lives. Here, the speaker comes to know that reality himself and, in the process, illuminates its conditions: one achieves the real only at the expense of oneself.

In the second elegy, those conditions are still more starkly drawn. Casting off the yoke of desire and having no need even for food, the speaker experiences a burst of energy on “the path of life,” but only so that he might rush toward its end:

Насмешливо сгибаясь и кряхтя  
 Под тяжестью сумы своей дырявой,  
 Алчбы и жажды бедное дитя,  
 Голодный труд, попутчик мой лукавый,  
 Уж прочь идет: теперь нам розный путь.  
 Вперед, вперед! Но изменили силы —  
 Очнулся я на рубеже могилы... (1:157).<sup>346</sup>

“Poslednie elegii” reiterate a common distinction between living and knowing. Chernyshevsky, for example, sought ways in which the living might exceed themselves in order to gain abstract and thus inherently universal knowledge. Yet these poems also suggest the impossibility of reconciling the living self with universal knowledge. Death creates the illusion that a place exists at the end of the road where one is finally free of oneself yet still aware of the world, and even more completely so. Such is the illusion offered in the peasant’s voice in “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda.” In “Poslednie elegii,” that voice collapses into the transitional moment between the living and the dead that created it.

In light of this collapse, life is not to be sacrificed, for there is nothing before or after its diversions. Thus, to return to the first elegy’s opening lines, irrational habits are as unavoidable as the death they court (Жадного недуга / Я не избег).<sup>347</sup> The enjambment underscores these lines as a statement of sincerity and finality, and the line itself reads like a polemic with those who would dare to blame the speaker for his human failings any more than they would blame him for death’s inevitability. Returning to a theme introduced in “Blazhen nezlobivyi poet,” the speaker of the elegies fears that no one will recognize him until he is a corpse:

<sup>346</sup> [Bending and groaning / Under the weight of my own tattered satchel / The pale child of hunger and thirst / Hunger’s labor, my cunning companion / Mockingly has already passed: now before us a rosy path / Forward! Forward! But my strength is deceiving – / I awaken on the edge of the grave]

<sup>347</sup> Klioutchkine discusses the social connotations of these habits, noting that cigars are the sole indulgence that Rakhmetov, the citizen par excellence of Chernyshevsky’s *Chto delat’?* [What is to be Done?] (1863), allows himself. The “ailment” invoked in line three of this stanza refers to a venereal disease which Nekrasov was rumored to have suffered. “Between Sacrifice and Indulgence,” pp. 47-8.

Промчалась тройка, проскрипел обоз —  
 Всё мимо, мимо!.. Подкосились ноги,  
 И он упал... Тогда к нему толпой  
 Сойдутся люди — смущены, унылы,  
 Почтят его ненужною слезой  
 И подвезут охотно — до могилы... (1:157)<sup>348</sup>

The topos of the crowd returns, suggesting once more than one takes interest in the other only when he departs into death. The crowd, like the speaker himself, is exonerated for its failings. They are wrapped up in themselves, but this is only the result of being wrapped up in life. Altruism is not possible to maintain in the realm of the living, just as the poet “sees everything” only in death; to empty oneself entirely is to gain no other content in return. Even if it is desired, attention to the other is attached to death. From this perspective, claims on the other’s behalf are conditional on a form of negativity beyond which no positive content can be assured.

In the last elegy, a cheering crowd fails to hear the “wild groan” of a single drowning ship. Life’s noise thus overwhelms the sound of the one who departs from it. “Погибни член—и кто его заметит? / А если и раздастся дикий стон / На берегу внезапный, одинокий, / За криками не будет слышен он” [A bark perishes – who will even notice it? / And if a wild groan resounds / On the shore – unexpected, solitary / It will not be heard above the shouts] (1:158).<sup>349</sup> Recalling the groan of the peasant in “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda,” we might say that the sound of death, whether sharp and sudden or elongated and ever-present, is more real than the sounds of life. Still, it is only in the contrast that a larger and more intensified real can be rendered at all.

When contrasts are collapsed, there is little else to do but live, though that life offers no coherence. It is death that draws together various petitions into a unified sound, and death that offers a glimpse into universal knowledge. In these revelations, “Poslednie elegii” provides a key to the peasant myth in “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda,” namely that the form of a coherent subject is an empty one. The self-criticizing subjects of Nekrasov’s poetry are derived from the forces – social and natural – which they cannot overcome. By contrast, the peasant is coherent only insofar as he remains other. In “Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod”ezda,” the peasant does not live but continuously dies, thus proffering the tension between “seeing everything” and being obliterated. The “firm ground” which Dobroliubov hoped the peasant might offer as a locus of stability and commonality as a form unto itself is, however, recast in “Poslednie elegii” as the grave. There, one may be all-knowing and universally connected, but one is also already gone. For all its misery, the realists hoped, reality is stable and replete with content. It is quite another view, equally satirical and sincere, to see the end of history as little more than the grave.

## II. *Language without History: Folk Stylizations*

<sup>348</sup> [The troika rushes past, the wagon screeches / All of them past! ... His legs give way, / He falls, Then around his corpse / People gather, confused, gloomy, / Mourning him with useless tears / And happily carry him off to the grave.] Lotman highlights in his reading that words are associated with traditional metaphors (the long path) as well as everyday realia (screeching wagons). Lotman, “N. A. Nekrasov. Last Elegies,” in *Analysis of the Poetic Text*, trans. D. Barton Johnson (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1976), p. 212.

<sup>349</sup> Translation by D. Barton Johnson, *Analysis of the Poetic Text*, p. 208.

Realists in the sixties attacked poetry for its neglect of reality's content, a phrase which, for some, might even approach tautology. It was form that represented the unreal. Dmitri Pisarev, for example, complained that poetry, instead of delivering content with the urgency it demands, "wastes time in the distractions of form."<sup>350</sup> The assault on poetry begins in part with materialist aesthetics, although Belinsky had begun to privilege prose as an aesthetic value in the '40s. In a review from 1847, he labels works by Pushkin (all written in verse) as prose in order to describe their merit. Tolstoy echoes these sentiments in a letter from 1850, declaring that poetry is not a medium for original thought but is "a mechanical act ... which nearly anyone can perform."<sup>351</sup> Beneath the elevation of prose as the medium for content lies the hope that a stable reality exists with or without the forms that articulate or shape it. Appeals to urgency, meanwhile, underscore the intensifying belief in the intelligentsia's historical mission. As history began to seem motored as much by peasants as by intellectuals, an "unformed," unexpressed reality acquired meaning unto itself.

Despite these changes, poetry's privileged status as a medium for reflection persists.<sup>352</sup> Reevaluation of artistic media was also affected by the correlation of folk language with poetic language. Fueled by the romantic nationalist discourses of the early nineteenth century, interest in folklore surged when peasant culture became an object of renewed attention during the reforms. In 1861, Nekrasov began stylizing folk poetry with such works as "Zelenyi shum," based on folk ballads, and "Korobeiniki," a narrative poem that includes stylizations of folk songs. Each contributed to the stylistic elements of *Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho*. During this time, a number of publications intended for peasant readers led to the establishment of philanthropic organizations dedicated to the cause of spreading peasant literacy. Nekrasov drew on such energies to circulate his poetry as "red books," printed editions intended for peasant consumption (though literacy rates among the peasantry remained low).<sup>353</sup> "Korobeiniki" was the first such red book, foregrounding new concerns with peasant literacy that, in turn drew attention to oral culture and added new dimensions to formulations of the peasant's voice.

Against this background, the language of the folk was seen as uniquely immediate and holistic, flouting the barriers of logic and reflective distance that were believed to distinguish elite culture. In realism, such elements acquire value but also demand containment. Unlike the formalism of elite poetry, emptied of content and thus stability, folk poetry was thought to generate language's core. It was a natural basis from which elite language developed and to which it could return and renew itself in creativity. Much as the peasant served as a basis for reality, peasant language served as an essential ground for the forms that developed from it.

Against the supposition that narrative forms are more properly social than poetic forms, Clare Cavanaugh suggests how the social nature of poetry intensifies the constructivist insight that realists hoped the peasant's voice might suppress:

In his book on Robert Frost, Richard Poirier gives us a better definition of the poet's labor (and the reader's) [than Bakhtin's]: he calls it "the work of knowing." The "contingencies of history and the messiness of daily life" are not "thought away," as

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<sup>350</sup> Mikhail Gasparov, *Ocherk istorii russkogo stikha: metrika, ritmika, rifma, strofika* (Moscow: Fortuna Limited, 2000), p. 168.

<sup>351</sup> Yuri Orlitsky, *Dinamika stikha i prozy v russkoi slovesnoti* (Moscow: RGGU, 2008), p. 166.

<sup>352</sup> Ginzburg describes the ways in which poetry in particular was changing in response to the genre system: poetic themes derived from "philosophical understandings, social events, and life experience" rather than classical paradigms. Personal experience, in particular, acquired a new depth of meaning as the primary basis of poetic themes. *O lirike* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1974), p. 32.

<sup>353</sup> Makeev, *Nekrasov*, pp. 269-271.

Bakhtin would have it, by the rigorous, rarefied demands of poetic style and meter. Rather, the poet thinks through life's contingences by way of poetic forms, and he thinks about the forms themselves in the process of constructing them. They become analogues for the "ordinary" constructs we use to guide us through the mess of daily life.<sup>354</sup>

In reference to Nekrasov's work, we can extend this insight. The poet's use of available forms – his utter subjection to a tradition that speaks through him and a contemporary reality that passes before his eyes and carries him away – provokes a rather anti-realist supposition.<sup>355</sup> We use forms because forms are all we have. This insight drives us deeper into an understanding of society's unbreakable grip on the self, not farther from it. Emphases on content such as those imagined in relation to the peasant mitigate the effects of society's essential formalism – a consequence highlighted by the social tensions in which Nekrasov's poetry engages.

Folk language, as it was commonly conceived, offers precisely this sense of security. Prose is elevated as one vehicle of content, and folk poetry as another. In the cultural imaginary of nineteenth-century Russia, folk language is natural so as not to be arbitrary, although for the same reason, it is insular and requires translation. With an alliance of the peasant and the *intelligent*, society could be naturalized, and nature, socialized. Ideally, one was left with a contentful world that legitimized the social structures built upon it. In this way, form (the elite) would never be without content (the peasant). The elite would thus never be entirely subject to those historical trends – sure to pass – that moved within them, while peasant voice would be rendered intelligible and brought into a dynamic relationship with intellectuals.

The poems analyzed in section one, "The Poet and his Crowds," bring together the crowd of the other and that of the self in a common affixation to life, and in a similar way, "Zelenyi shum" and "Korobeiniki" bring together the peasant's natural language and the social language of his observers. Just as the end of history turns into a grave, the peasant's natural content turns into a form, subject to the passing trends that shape it. Instead of naturalizing poetry, peasant language formalizes nature. Before tracing these revelations as they emerge in "Zelenyi shum" and "Korobeiniki," let me further elaborate conceptions of folk language by sketching general influences and examining Alexander Potebnia's *Mysl' i iazyk* [Thought and Language] (1861).

Approaches to language in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries focused on the topic of origin and positioned peasants within that origin in various ways. In "Essay on the Origin of Language" (1781), Rousseau argued that language originated in passionate exclamation and as a poetic stage that had been lost to the development of civilization. In "Treatise on the Origin of Language" (1772) John Gottfried Herder rejects this notion, arguing instead that language structures consciousness and is a product of social organization. Still, Herder shares with Rousseau the belief that language is, in essence, poetic. For Herder, language is a hybrid of social and natural elements, epitomized by poetry as "rooted in our animal nature, but socialized in the reflexive movement that makes us human."<sup>356</sup> As Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs contend, poetry, according to these accounts, is lent a restorative function, keeping language vital

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<sup>354</sup> Clare Cavanaugh, "Forms of the Ordinary: Bakhtin, Prosaics, and the Lyric," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 41:1 (1997), p. 42.

<sup>355</sup> In an 1855 missive in *Sovremennik*, Nekrasov insists that artists do not invent their material, but "involuntarily imitate what has already passed and what has already been recorded." The poet thus appears as a conduit of language which may be stored in the past or circulating in the present. Quoted in Yuri Tynianov, *Poetika, istoriia literatury, kino*, ed. by A.P. Chudakov, M. O. Chudakova and E. A. Toddes (Moskva: Nauka, 1977), p. 25.

<sup>356</sup> Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs, *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 173.

and affective even as it develops into a rational medium. Language's restorative role in the romantic movement is associated with peasant populations which were tasked to safeguard a nation's identity in their linguistic expressivity. Other eighteenth-century writers discussing language's origin suppose, against Rousseau, that its basis lies in action, that is, pragmatic, nonmetaphorical communication.<sup>357</sup> This, too, was conceived in relation to the peasantry, a group conceived, in part, as a linguistic complex of practical colloquialisms and poetic imagination.

Folk language, practical and poetic serves as an archive or a trace of language's origin for those concerned to establish it. Conceptualized as a moment of passage or, as Derrida describes it, a moment "between pre-language and the linguistic catastrophe initiating the divisive discourse," folk language depends on a contrastive relationship.<sup>358</sup> In the cultural imagination traced by Derrida, divisive discourse, that is, less transparent and more socially conflicted uses of language, represent a simultaneously natural and unnatural phase of human development. Primal origin and civilized development are, for Rousseau among others, both necessary, but though only the former stage retains naturalness as a category of value. In this paradigm, language's naturalness is associated with a notion of voice as the elemental form of language. Thus, a vocalic cry provides the raw material from which sense is eventually produced. The prolonged sound of "o" in the peasant's groan in "Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod'ezda," for example, exemplifies how vowels, in particular, generate the essential, material sound from which a more developed language is derived. Consonants "stop" the sound of vowels, and in the same way, rationality acts against language's vocalic nature.

Voice, too, depends on its oppositional relationship to the forms which contain as a concept weighted with these assertions of origin and materiality, voice is "language without discourse, speech without sentence, beyond the cry, but a sort of hinge..."<sup>359</sup> The notion of a hinge signifies the nature of voice as it is reconstituted in a moment of passage. Voice is defined by what it is not, i.e., a civilized reasonableness that bear down upon it. Hegel suggests another consequence of the transitional moment that produces voice: "Every animal finds a voice in its violent death; it expressed itself as a removed self."<sup>360</sup> Synonymous, in this instance, with self-conscious subjectivity, voice objectifies the trace of the animalistic self but also tokens the emergence of that which replaces it. The reverberation of voice preserves the transition, and voice itself brings together the opposite realms glimpsed in that transition.

In this correlation, reality-as-voice becomes, according to Derrida, the primary metaphysical conceit of modern thought, even in its materialist guises. The hinge moment is reimagined as a state of being unto itself and mythologized as a locus of absolute transparency. Private thoughts did not exist, for public words expressed them fully. Such is the voice that is declared lost to the civilized but preserved among peasants and in folklore. In Russia's mid-century, transformations of this cultural myth indicate a similarly conflicted relationship to sociality as mechanism of control and restriction. Alienation is the price to pay for rationality,

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<sup>357</sup> On the idea of language's impact on a tradition of non-verbalism in Russian poetry, see Sofiya Khagi, *Silence and the Rest: Verbal Skepticism in Russian Poetry* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013), pp. 3-39.

<sup>358</sup> Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 148.

<sup>359</sup> *ibid.*, 279. Paul Zumthor describes voice in a similar manner as "the basis for language but allows us a space outside of it. <...> Linked to intense emotions and elemental dynamisms, it is speechless speech." *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*, trans. by Kathryn Murphy-Judy (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 6.

<sup>360</sup> Quoted in Agamben, *Language and Death*, p. 43. The quote comes from Lectures delivered 1805-6.



but with rationality, one may reconcile divided selves and societies in still more integrative ways: this was precisely the hope attached to rationality for realists in mid-century Russia.

Potebnia's *Mysl' i iazyk*, a study of linguistics influenced by Wilhelm von Humboldt and, through him, the tradition of language ideology that I have just sketched, brings these trends into the cultural context of the period. Following Humboldt's precept that language is essentially social and develops once an awareness of the world as "not-I" is installed, Potebnia locates its origin in children, though his examples of child-like language are drawn exclusively from folklore. Sociality, on his account, is the result of a developed self-consciousness. Still, one might return to one's childhood, as it were, to indulge in language's early phases. Potebnia's insistence on the creative potential of early language suggests a need to "play at" a form of sociality that does not require self-emptying, but he nevertheless cautions: "an adult can indulge in games but should judge what it means for him now and what it meant for him in the past; in childhood, games are building toward work."<sup>361</sup> For Potebnia, language-as-game is associated with poetry as well as peasants, whereas language-as-work is associated with prose as well as the intelligentsia. The two form an alliance so that the benefits of both might be preserved while their differences are maintained.

Bauman and Briggs describe such alliances as interventionalist, arguing that language ideology in the nineteenth century places language in an autonomous realm between the natural and the social so that it might move toward one or the other depending on certain needs. Natural language stabilizes and suppresses difference, whereas social language controls that difference. Interventionalism also ensures legitimacy: "the limits of what the folk can articulate establishes the interventionist baseline."<sup>362</sup> These dynamics find resonance in Potebnia's work, the aim of which is described by Boris Gasparov as the "mutual communication and cooperation between two sets of values."<sup>363</sup>

The "poetic" and "prosaic" modes of creation in language <...> stay, respectively, for mythology and science, prehistorical roots of a nation and its historical development, spontaneous life experience and formal education, oral and written cultural tradition, and last but by no means least, for the words of *narod* and *intelligentsia* (ibid).

A major contention of *Mysl' i iazyk* is that poetry creates linkages between words and objects and prose utilizes these linkages to describe and judge the world. As Gasparov and Thomas Seifried have shown, Potebnia activates discourses of Romantic subjectivity from his sources, but also operates within a culture of positivism.<sup>364</sup> Given these dual influences, Potebnia's works offer insight into how reality is associated with voice as a legitimizing basis for social existence. Both Potebnia and Nekrasov suggest how peasant naturalness illuminates a sociality not of the past but of the present – divided in some ways, unified in others.

For Potebnia, the concept of inner form mediates between language's distinct functions. Words contain a tangible essence – this is their image – which is established in the moment of their creation. To fully acquire language, speakers move beyond responding to feelings which they cannot name and view themselves from the perspective of others. Thus, a child achieves

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<sup>361</sup> Alexander Potebnia, *Mysl' i iazyk* (Moscow: Labirint, 1999), p. 152. Subsequent citations to Potebnia will appear parenthetically in the text, by page number.

<sup>362</sup> Bauman and Briggs, *Voices of Modernity*, p. 195.

<sup>363</sup> Boris Gasparov, "From the Romantic Past to the Modern World: Historical-Cultural Underpinnings of Potebnia's Thought on Language," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1-2 (1994), pp. 94-103.

<sup>364</sup> Thomas Seifried, *The Word Made Self: Russian Writings on Language, 1860-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 83.

language if, uttering “*veter!*” [wind!], she passes through three stages: 1) sensory perception of wind, 2) recognition that this perception accords with previous perceptions, and 3) recognition that this perception is ‘wind’ *to her*. This last stage constitutes the word’s inner form (127). As words travel and change, each reformulation becomes the inner form to the word from which it developed. Potebnia emphasizes that, in order to know why a given word came to mean what it does, one would have to reconstruct the original perception. Such reconstruction is possible to a certain degree through etymology, but the larger point is that “words are never creations, but recreations” (133).

Folk language, for Potebnia, offers unique access to inner form, largely because it preserves the moment in which inner form is first created. Still, folk language can also fall short of inner form even as it refreshes our perception of it. For example, phrases found in folk poetry such as “*trava zelena*” are “random associations of perceptions,” in which each word, according to Potebnia, is not sufficiently abstracted from the other so that the speaker could apply them to any number of things (139). When the vitality of inner form is freshly achieved, however, folk language revives educated society, whose overly developed language-use “leaves nothing for the speaker between [concept and word] <...> When we speak, we understand that the word belongs to us and to the past” (152). Educated society, placing too much emphasis on the past, i.e., standardized meaning, loses the essential knowledge, possessed by peasants, that “words belong to us.”

Despite Potebnia’s nostalgia for a language that “belongs to us,” he also champions “a love of truth” which requires acculturation (134). The desire to access objects in themselves is what distinguishes words from pre-words, a process that involves subjective coloring but is no less oriented toward objectivity. Language is thus “the path to science,” building the essential connection between “our own narrow thought and the thinking of our tribe, nation, humanity” (145). Whereas educated society stands to revitalize “their own narrow thought,” the folk stand to standardize their language-use in view of increasing large and abstract social domains (179). Potebnia diagnoses an extreme insularity among the folk, citing examples of proverbs which, he claims, depend too heavily on specific knowledge – certain fishing practices, for example, that “no one else would know.” Another example of insularity comes in the following saying: “He умер Данило, а болячка вдавила” [Danilo didn’t die, the ailment pressed him in] (152). The illogicality of the statement is, for Potebnia, manifest: a fatal ailment is not death. The words are dissimilar, but the concepts are the same. Concepts ensure understanding and neglecting them is the failure of peasant language on Potebnia’s account.

Like the tradition preceding him, Potebnia wishes to revitalize a moment of passage into language proper, where he finds the formation of self-consciousness. In his account, this moment enshrines an authentic connection between “our narrow thought and the thinking of our tribe, our nation, humanity.” Language is purified of “dead forms” which fail to connect us to ourselves, and peasants perform this task of connection. For example, in an anecdote quoted from Grimm, one peasant remarks to another how strange it is that the French call bread *du pain*. The other responds, “yes but there is *Brot*, too” (153). So fresh and personal is the connection between the word *Brot* and its referent “bread” that no other language can possibly express the concept. Still, peasant language risks excessive specificity when identity becomes a matter internal to a nation. Highly personalized language use renders language an expression of identity, but it also threatens to dislodge any mediating factor between a speaker and someone who does not share his or her world. *Mysl’ i iazyk* concludes with a call for collaboration between peasant and intelligentsia and the aspects of language which they represent. Until “total knowledge” is achieved, each group will serve its distinctive purpose, united in the effort to maintain language’s inner form

(134). Such form is, however, expressive of conflicted purposes to make language one's own and allow it to be someone else's.

In Potebnia's account, the folk enshrine a Derridean notion of voice as the trace of lost transparency through their revitalization of inner form. Potebnia also finds that such transparency entails exclusion. If isolated groups such as the peasantry possess their own language, no power can be exercised over them and other groups can collaborate with them. In *Mysl' i iazyk*, we are left with the sense that language ought to be insular enough to be national, but not so insular that its users build their own social worlds.

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"Zelenyi shum" begins by framing itself squarely within the voice of the folk. A footnote from Nekrasov explains the title which also serves as an incantatory refrain throughout the poem: "Зеленый шум: так народ называет пробуждение природы весной" [Green noise is what the peasants call the awakening of spring] (2:51). With this framing, the voice of the folk is also associated with noise, recalling its positioning by language ideology between sound and sense – the raw material of language preserved in usages which are more creative than rational. Such noise is also thematized as the onset of spring and the cyclicity of the seasons. The synesthetic element is invoked in the phrase "Green Noise" as well as the verb-pair *idet-gudet* [it blows/it drones] that accompanies it: ("Идет-гудет Зеленый Шум/Зеленый Шум, весенний шум!") (2:51). If sound cannot logically be green, internal linguistic connections draw on the materiality of language more than the concepts expressed through it. Behind the phrase stands a story of connections, or an etymology known by a speaker or a group. The verb pair *idet-gudet* [it goes-blows] also exemplifies the epithets with Potebnia describes as "unconscious efforts" to renew inner form in folk poetry, where new word combinations invite us to consider the roots that might connect them. With *idet-gudet*, it is difficult to say whether movement is a metaphor for sound or sound a metaphor for movement. Language loses its figurative, abstract nature and acquires an aspect of self-referentiality.

This form of language is personal in its linguistic transparency but radically impersonal in the nature-like holism which it comes to embody. The voice of the folk is quite literally the voice of nature, which echoes regularly like the seasons, reminding readers, who will soon descend into a narrative of betrayal and vengeance, that life will be renewed. Regardless of what happens, there persists the moment of passage from sound to sense. Building on a sense of language's internal stability, language appears, in the first half of the poem, to speak itself. In the stanza quoted below, this internal energy is suggested by the repeated "v" sounds in line two, the repetition of "vo" in line five and the grammatical near-rhyme of *verkhovoi / ol'khovye* in lines two and three.<sup>365</sup>

Вдруг ветер верховой:  
Качнет кусты ольховые,  
Подымет пыль цветочную  
Как облако: все зелено

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<sup>365</sup> These devices – repetition, consonance, and grammatical and internal rhymes – are also specific to folk poetry and would render the poem marked for Nekrasov's readership. On themes and patterns of folk poetry see Scherr, Barry "Taranovsky's Laws: Further Observations from a Comparative Perspective," *Poetry and Poetics: A Centennial Tribute to Kiril Taranovsky*, ed. by Barry Scherr, James Bailey and Vida T. Johnson (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2014), pp. 343-63, and John Bailey, *Three Russian Lyric Folk Song Meters* (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1992), pp. 13-38.

According to Culler, the sense that “language is as if shaped from elsewhere” is a distinguishing feature of poetry. The incantatory quality of the refrain in “Zelenyi shum” contributes to poetic effect of depersonalization, evoking, in Culler’s words, “rote memory rather than the memory of understanding.”<sup>367</sup> From this perspective, *vozdukh* and *voda* are brought together on the basis of sound, and only then are we able to consider their semantic connections. Rhyme thus “convinces without sense,” an effect which leads Mutlu Blasing to argue that poetry’s foregrounding of rhythm means that it “takes its power from the public, emotional power of language itself.”<sup>368</sup> Under the influence of a placating spring wind, in “Zelenyi shum,” such self-abandonment is largely positive. Here, language is naturalized in the most desirable way: it assures continuation rather than transience.

However, beneath the cover of spring and within language in the instance of its renewal, there emerges a form of self-awareness that does not, as Potebnia might have hoped, appear to bridge insular social groups or mitigate conflicts between them. In the second half of “Zelenyi shum,” the first-person speaker, an *otkhodnik* peasant working in the city, relays a balladic narrative of vengeance: he has returned to the village to discover that his wife has been unfaithful.<sup>369</sup> As I. L. Al’mi observes, Nekrasov often introduces contemporary content into folkloric forms, coloring the vengeance plot with realia of changing economic circumstances such as the movement from village to city.<sup>370</sup> It is perhaps this combination of past and present that complicates the mode of language ascribed to the folk in “Zeleyini shum.” In Potebnia’s theorizations, we saw that folk language must be regulated lest the freshness of inner form—a conduit for insular self-expression—lead to total isolation. This process of development from transparency to potential conflict is paralleled in Nekrasov’s poem by the lapse of spring into winter.

By the poem’s second stanza, language performs assertions of desire and authority. The speaker’s wife disturbs the peace by speaking (“Сама сказала, глупая, / Типун ей на язык!” [She spoke herself, the fool / Devil take her tongue!] (2:51). The speaker places the blame on language itself rather than action. Language (*iazyk*) overwhelms the background of noise (*shum*) and creates a tense silence. Sentences are interrupted by the confusion of the speaker (Убить... так жаль сердечную! [To kill...but I pity the dear!]) and rhythm is generated by conflict and disjunction: In the rhyme *gliadit/molchit*, language’s logic becomes a kind of tit for tat: “Глядит — молчит жена / Молчу... а дума лютая / Покоя не дает” [She stares, keeps silent / Silence... but fierce thoughts / Give me no rest] (2:52). The disjunctions in this second line configure language as embattled; potential voices are not silent but fierce in their suppression. The transition from potentiating renewal to potentiating rage suggests that although the former assuages the latter, these previously opposed poles of language may not be so different.

The reconfiguration of language as stifled rage is marked by intensified self-consciousness. In Potebnia’s account, becoming aware of others has the positive effect of

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<sup>366</sup> [Suddenly the galloping wind / Shakes the alder bushes / A floral dust is raised / Like a cloud: everything is green – / The air and the water!]

<sup>367</sup> Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p. 138.

<sup>368</sup> Mutlu Blasing, *Lyric Poetry: The Pain and the Pleasure of Words* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 1-18.

<sup>369</sup> The vengeance plot is typical of folk ballads but is also a formula developed in eighteenth and nineteenth century poetry. Michael Wachtel, *The Development of Russian Verse Meter and its Meanings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 20-58.

<sup>370</sup> I. L. Al’mi, *Stat’i o poezii i proze* (Vladimir: Vladimirskii pedagogicheskii universitet, 1998), p. 220.

restraint. But as we have already seen in the poems from section two, for Nekrasov, configuring the self in relation to others is fraught with ambiguity. In “Zelenyi shum,” the other of nature which ensures self-forgetting is replaced by the other of the crowd who taunts the speaker and encourages murder: “В глаза твои бесстыжие / Соседи наплюют!” [Into your shameless eyes / Neighbors will spit!] (2:52). The irony is, of course, that murdering to save face among one’s neighbors means losing self-possession rather than reestablishing it. If the speaker were to express his violent thoughts, he would no longer be expressing himself. Moving between the natural and the social configurations of language, “Zelenyi shum,” causes them to collide as nature and neighbor blend into a single public. The cyclicity of the seasons may counteract the violence of narrative tension, but nature has already lost its purity. What is more, social language produces (and indeed stokes) conflict as much as standardization. “Zelenyi shum” denaturalizes language by reworking the voice of the *narod* into a language already fraught with power and desire, suggesting that self-interest and socialization exist side-by-side.

We have seen that the voice of the peasant is valued only insofar as it is homogenous. Language is social for Potebnia and others of his time because it resolves conflicts rather than admits to them. In “Zelenyi shum,” the social and the natural combined into a site of conflict but once their similarities are exposed, the boundary between the functions of language is restored.

И все мне песня слышится  
 Одна в лесу, в лугу:  
 «Люби, куда любиться,  
 Терпи, куда терпится,  
 Прощай, пока прощается,  
 И — бог тебе судья!» (2:53)<sup>371</sup>

It is at this point that the sound of nature acquires sense. Nature’s song unifies language, generating, for example, the rhyme *v lesu/ v lugu* as if from within its own structures, just as it unifies the landscape under a blanket of green. Language itself has a clear message rather than serving as vehicle for any number of messages. By the end of the poem, when nature finally speaks, it makes clear its social prerogative, translating spring’s renewal into forgiveness.

“Zelenyi shum” suggests what is at stake in the effort to maintain “voice” as an insular—but not too insular—connection between self and world and a potentiating expression of vital interest. Yet the entanglements of communication cannot be easily distinguished from the moments in which we make language our own. Personalizing language involves expressing the social codes embedded in it, but the larger point is that codes are themselves numerous.<sup>372</sup> Taking the divide between peasantry and intelligentsia as an index of difference counters the move of formulating it as a fixed binary within language. Nekrasov offers a hint of this understanding of language as all things for all people: prose and poetry; science and myth; speaking and writing.

<sup>371</sup> [And then a single song came to me / In the forest and the meadows / “Love as far as you can love, / Endure as far as you can endure, / Forgive, so long as you can forgive, And let God judge you!]

<sup>372</sup> Relevant to this point is Spivak’s argument that language cannot be personalized by those who are excluded from its structures and are regulated through the labeling of sensical/non-sensical. Language is maintained *as* dominant discourse, but the two terms are not identical. Indeed, Potebnia is at pains to render the joke “Не умер Данило, а болячка вдавила” dispossessed of its own expressive power by categorizing it as pre-linguistic, though its intelligibility remains obvious. “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, pp. 271-313.

Yet, the very fact of Nekrasov's stylization of folklore adds an additional tension to the split perception of language. J. A. Ogden explores the valences of *stilizatsiia* in cultural contexts according to which reworkings of folk poetry emphasize rather than hide their distance from the original. *Stilizatsiia*, writes Ogden, is not an imitation of nature, but an imitation of an imitation, and is therefore characterized by a heightened awareness of social differences and "the implications of borrowing another's voice."<sup>373</sup> For "Zelenyi shum" to be accepted by audiences as a rendering of folk style, it was less important that it faithfully reproduce certain traits.<sup>374</sup> Ogden argues that an "authentic" stylization accorded with the established idea of the *narod* rather than the features of folk poetry per se. In this context, it becomes clear that folk style, though viewed as uniquely 'natural,' is, in the end, *style*.

Like "Zelenyi shum," "Korobeiniki" suggests that there are no *a priori* principles which arbitrate social needs. The poems show language to reveal the self-interest of the speakers who use it. Written in the same year as "Zelenyi shum," "Korobeiniki," develops Nekrasov's use of folkloric forms by establishing the journey plot typical of fairytales that appears again in *Komu na Rusi*.<sup>375</sup> In addition to the use of folklore, "Korobeiniki" marks another important transition toward concerns of literacy and orality.

"Korobeiniki" begins with a dedication to the speaker's hunting companion, a man named Gavriilo Iakovlevich. The suggestion of the poet's close connection to a peasant would appear to readers of *Sovremennik* as authorizing him to speak in folk style. To potential peasant readers, however, it would appear as direct address: "Буду рад, коли понравится, / Не понравится — смолчу" [I will be glad if you like it / If you don't like it, I will be silent] (2:51). Like Turgenev, the writer-as-hunter legitimizes his practice by indicating his preference for experiencing nature as opposed to receiving it second-hand. The dedication assures its addressee that if his poem proves inadequate, he will return to hunting – a code for the reality of the peasant countryside to which he, too, has access. In this self-authorization, the speaker delivers to Gavriilo Iakovlevich a world which is at once unknown to him ("что строчишь карандашом?" [what do you scribble with that pencil?]) and recognizable as his own. The poet's promised silence (*smolchu*) seems to indicate that he will accept the difference between social realms if Gavriilo Iakovlevich is displeased, but he will not therefore stop writing, in part because writing is able to evoke the voice of the folk even in its separation from it.

It is this voice that begins the poem: the sonorous call of a peddler, which reads in part as a lyrical apostrophe to his wares ("Ой, полна, полна моя коробушка" [Oh how full how full the little box]) and in part an incantation to lure potential buyers. The peddler literalizes the primal desire associated with voice into economic and sexual exchange. The buyer beckoned in the first stanza is also seduced by the peddler, who promises to return to marry her after he returns from the journey that begins the poem. This journey has no motive except to empty the *korobushka* and fill the peddlers' coffers and return to silence the language of their shouts (Ситцы есть у нас

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<sup>373</sup> Ogden, "The Impossible Peasant Voice," p. 518. Also see Ogden, "Peasant Listening, Listening to Peasants: Miscommunication and Ventriloquism in Nekrasov's 'Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho,'" *The Russian Review*, vol. 72 (2013), pp. 590-606.

<sup>374</sup> This is not to say that "Zelenyi shum" does not borrow forms of folk poetry, including its meter, also used in *Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho*. Nekrasov altered folk meters with irregular masculine endings; according to Mikhail Gasparov this was likely for the sake of simplification. *Metri i smysl'* (Moscow: Fortuna, 2000), p. 186.

<sup>375</sup> For his folk stylizations, Nekrasov drew on collections published throughout the '50s and '60s, including those by Afanasyev (*skazki*), Buslaev (*byliny*), Barsov and Rybnikov (laments and songs). T. A. Besedina, *Epopeia narodnoi zhizni: Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho N. A. Nekrasova* (St. Petersburg: Studiorum Slavicorum Monumenta, 2001), pp. 34-42.

богатые, / Есть миткаль кумач, и плис. / Есть у нас мыла пахучие...) [We have rich chintzes / Calico, bunting, and velvet. / We have fragrant soaps...] (2:27). Language appears as a means for expressing desires as well as the lies and exaggerations told to fulfill them. The sexual seduction already established as part of the peddlers' language continues as a leitmotif that entangles them in a nexus of political strife.

In the poem's third chapter, the peddler Tikhonych expresses remorse for seducing village women into buying his wares (though it is the peddler Ivan whose literal seduction initiates the poem's narrative). Tikhonych's confession shifts into reflections on the conditions of peasant women in the wake of the Crimean war, who distract themselves with adornments. Though Tikhonych counts himself among those affected by the war, he also admits to his collusion with the demands of the Tsarist state, identifying his practice with tax-collection and military recruitment and finishing his soliloquy in despair: "За дела-то душегубные / Как придется отвечать? / Вот и мы гневим всевышнего" [For such evil deeds / How can one answer? / Here we have enraged the almighty.] (2:30). Tikhonych's confession performs a familiar move in Nekrasov's poetry by revealing the speaking subject behind his language. In the process, he draws language into social and political exchange.

After identifying the practice of peddling with historical forces, Tikhonych attempts to dissociate himself from them on the basis of nationality, launching into a critique of Paris fashions amongst the nobility. But entering into the entanglements of history, the peddlers can no longer represent "voice" in its natural form, and nationalism does not help them mediate their particular interests. The natural legitimation of language, if it exists, finds not representative to ground the conflicts that proliferate within it.

The issue of judgment returns as an immediate concern of the present that must be negotiated by secular means rather than left in the hands of God as it is in the final lines of "Zelenyi shum" (И — бог тебе судья!). When the peddlers embark on their journey home, they encounter a stranger who robs and murders them, a scenario that reintroduces the theme of judgment invoked just before the murder, when Tikhonych tells the story of a man wrongly sent to prison: "Нужно было из Спиридова / Вызвать Тита Кузьмича, / Описались — из Давыдова / Взяли Титушку-ткача! [They had to summon from Spiridov Titus Kuz'mich / They made a slip — and from Davydov took Titushka the Weaver!] (2:40). The summons carried out by written language are worryingly arbitrary, but the negative effects of power cannot be separated from spoken language, which is implicated in the whole of the poem. In this stanza, linguistic play confuses words and objects in a manner which imbricates it in the practical reality of secular courts and the consequences of judicial decisions. More than inviting fresh perception of inner form, the conflation of Spiridov and Davydov suggests a language that organizes reality without any particular, much less legitimate, warrant.

In opposition to ideologies of voice, this poem reflects on language as a site of conflicting needs and uncertain judgements. Tikhonych represents the ethically compromised, historically imbricated, and arbitrary nature of language in association with his peddling, but his last words are those of a song which, at first glance, appears as voice. The song's sonorous refrain, "Холодно, странничек, холодно, / Холодно, родименькой, холодно" [It's cold, little wanderer, it's cold/ It's cold, my dear one, it's cold] varying with *golodno* recalls the incantatory rhythms of "Zelenyi shum" (2:42). However, against the background of conflict already established by the poem, vital needs such as hunger cannot be distinguished from the conflicts they provoke. Language is inextricable from interest, and it is for this reason that the *lesnik* who murders the peddlers cannot help but boast of his acquisitions, just as the speaker's wife in "Zelenyi shum" could not but confess her infidelity, and just as so many of Nekrasov's speakers cannot but admit to their own failings.

In this section I have argued that the construct of the *narod* within language regulates social order. Nekrasov's stylizations of folk language perform this regulation but also shift the meaning of the social from acculturation to conflict. Different forms of language emerge in contrast to the conception of a collaboration between the *narod* who establish its 'firm ground' and the intellectuals who can regulate it. When these forms interpenetrate, language becomes simply a means by which worlds are shaped and reshaped: a form indifferent to its content. Such indifference may well find a metaphoric equivalent in nature, though not in the way that Potebnia and others may have hoped.

### III. *Voice(s) in Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho*

Begun in the same period as "Zelenyi shum" and "Korobeiniki," *Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho* is Nekrasov's longest, arguably most complex work. This narrative poem is composed of four parts, three published serially between 1866 and 1877, and one published posthumously in 1908 in the first complete edition.<sup>376</sup> Stylistically, the *poema* follows an unrhymed metrical pattern, developed in "Zelenyi shum," derived from folk poetry. Inserted songs and stories alter the general pattern, further complicated by the genre of the *poema*, in which poetic and narrative elements are combined. Despite a tendency in scholarship on realism to contrast poetry with the novel as the privileged narrative genre, poetry has a longer history as a narrative form, defined simply as the recounting of events with meter and rhyme.<sup>377</sup> Genre theories based, in particular, on a model of unified subjectivity, may echo theories of language invested in creating it. *Komu na Rusi* is interpreted as novelistic in its dialogic nature and, from this perspective, is a forum of voices – indeed the voice of the other (an "authentic" portrayal of peasant life) – rather than the expression of a poet.<sup>378</sup> For similar reasons, lyric principles are deduced in the *poema*'s narrator, who inserts his own "lyrical plot" into a sprawling narrative and thus gives it shape.<sup>379</sup> In both interpretations, one finds a concept of voice related to the myth of the peasant, either mediated through narrative representation or defined in contrast to it.

In this section, I argue that narrative and poetic devices combine in *Komu na Rusi* to develop leitmotifs of death and fatalism as a passage between distinct elements – or voices – that does not produce a stable ground between them. Yury Lebedev argues that balancing the perspective of a lyric subject and that of characters is a central dilemma of the *poema* as a genre. Letting characters speak, he writes, "demands relaxedness and daring" on the part of the poet who must relinquish his ability to organize a world according to the values of a central subject.<sup>380</sup>

<sup>376</sup> Due to the unfinished nature of the work, the order of the chapters remains a matter of debate. The sum total of what Nekrasov has managed to complete before his death in '77 includes a number of notes which suggested different versions of the order of existing chapters. Publications vary in their ordering, but most conclude with "Pir – na ves' mir" [A Feast for the Whole Village].

<sup>377</sup> "Narrative Poetry," *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, eds., Roland Green, Stephen Cushman, et al. (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 911-915. Revived in the romantic period, narrative poetry becomes a site for questioning a sense of opposition cast between prose and poetry and thus also heightens the ideological distinctions embedded in that opposition. Monique Morgan, *Narrative Means, Lyric Ends: Temporality in the Nineteenth-Century British Long Poem*, (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2009), p. 3.

<sup>378</sup> Yuri Lebedev, *N. A. Nekrasov i russkaia poema 1840-1850 godov* (Yaroslavl': Verkhne-volzhskoe, 1971).

<sup>379</sup> E. V. Sazhenina, "Liricheskaia sobytiinost' v poeme N. A. Nekrasova "Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho," in *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, vol. 385 (2014), pp. 42-9.

<sup>380</sup> Lebedev, *N. A. Nekrasov i russkaia poema*, p. 19.



In this apparent self-emptying, however, the narrator of *Komu na Rusi* does not offer a conduit to a reality that exists beyond him. Rather, a stance of self-critique, developed throughout Nekrasov's poetry, draws a fatalistic view of reality together with its corrective historical mission. This becomes the basis of the *poema*'s thematics. The answer lying behind the *poema*'s titular question – no one – reveals a negative core within the concept of voice. Distinctions imposed in language between, roughly, the rational and the irrational, the “personal” and the mediated, collapse into a negative view of reality established in early realism and projected, though never fully contained, onto the peasant as the bearer of a pre-modern fatalism. In this view, reality tokens the annihilation of all things rather than a “firm ground” provided by the *narod* as Russian realists conceived it. Such a negative view finds expression through the themes of peasant life that had been stylized in relation to it, expressing the fears that elite culture had hoped to contain in that image.

The *poema*'s prologue, which stages a folkloric plot based on a tale from Alexander Afanasyev's 1855 collection, “Pravda i Krivda” [Truth and Crookedness], was published just before the closure of *Sovremennik* in 1866, effectively the end of the period known as the sixties. The remaining parts were published in *Otechestvennye zapiski* [Notes from the Fatherland], the journal to which Nekrasov moved as acting editor and which had attracted the contributions of major writers of the burgeoning populist movement, a context that illuminates the *poema*'s preoccupation with peasant-intelligentsia collaboration. Set in the wake of the emancipation reform, the plot of *Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho* begins as seven peasants encounter one another on a road and begin to debate “who in Russia lives well,” each positing an answer that would seem to structure the rest of the *poema*: priest, landowner, merchant, bureaucrat, and the tsar himself. As commentators note, Nekrasov casts folkloric time within contemporary history; a pre-modern Rus' is also a historically specific period in the wake of emancipation: the summer of 1861.<sup>381</sup> The debate among the characters also speaks to new conceptions of peasants among the elite as involved in the movements of history and discussing the changes that were affecting them directly.

After the first two chapters in part one, the folkloric plot recedes into the background as characters are diverted from their journey, visiting a village fair, reveling in festivities, engaging a storytelling contest, witnessing the habits of a nearby village, and celebrating, finally, the death of that village's landowner. Mimicking the disappointment of the reforms, the final celebration is qualified by the fact, known to readers, that the landowner's family plans to renege their promise of granting the peasants ownership of the land. Despite visions of the future supplied by various “interventionist characters” from the intelligentsia who find themselves among the peasantry and, at times, the narrator himself, the overwhelming mood of the *poema* is one of resignation.

Boris Korman argues that tragic themes that pervade Nekrasov's poetry are present in *Komu na Rusi* but are also mitigated by the narrator, who offers the perspective of a wider historical vision that exceeds that of the characters.<sup>382</sup> The narrator thus performs a similar function to that of Grisha Dobrosklonov, the son of a village priest, who offers “happy songs” as a contrast to the peasant characters' tragic laments and thus, it would seem, brings peasants into an alliance with the intelligentsia who can turn their dying cries into a perpetual voice. Grisha's song performs a transformation, common in cultural discourses, from destruction to potential. His answer to the *poema*'s question is, like the rest of the characters, negative, but in a manner that corrects their fatalistic outlook: peasants are “the happy ones” precisely because they are

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<sup>381</sup> V. E. Evgen'ev-Maksimov, *Zhizn' i deiatel'nost' N. A. Nekrasova* (Moskva: Nauka, 1947), p. 53.

<sup>382</sup> Korman, *Lirika Nekrasova*, p. 118.

unhappy. Such is the logic, challenged in “Poslednie elegii,” that he who suffers in death will also somehow overcome it.

As I have argued, the concept of a singular voice requires mediation; it must be otherized. Grisha’s interventions against the tragic pathos of the *poema* follow this model, establishing a point of contrast to its dominant devices. For example, in the last completed chapter, “Pir – na ves’ mir” [A Feast for the Whole Village], when a celebration turns, unsurprisingly, to morbid themes (a debate breaks out to counter the first: who in Russia lived worst?), Grisha attempts to shift the mood. To do so, however, he must depart the staging area in which the *poema*’s chapters unfold: a “hundred-voiced road” that inverts the thematics of the journey into a sense of stagnation. In the space of the road, the crowd bears down upon him with all the implications that have been attached to it – diversion, immediacy, myopic perspective. Though Grisha purports to channel the voice of this crowd, he cannot find a space for that voice among them. Indeed, added to the valences of the crowd thus far explored is a fundamental feature of the *poema*: communicative exchange. The structure of exchange appears inextricable from resignation, whereas Grisha’s “happy song” requires that he isolate himself. Only in isolation can Grisha establish voice; distanced from the hundred-voiced road, he wanders in the open fields (a contrast to the road’s confinement) and hears peasants singing from a distance. Sitting on a hill overlooking these singers, Grisha transforms their song – indeed, a lament – into the optimism of his wider vision. Forging an alliance between himself and these singers, he also bridges oral and literate cultures (his brother transcribes the song) and, in the process, shows how “voice” is an effect created by contrast.

Thus constructed, the peasant’s voice lies beyond forms rather than among them. To access it, one must not only distance oneself from the crowd, but also “race through discourse,” in Peter Brooks’ expression, meaning overstepping processes of exchange to arrive at content that is divorced from them.<sup>383</sup> By contrast, to dwell in discourse is to dwell in the way in which words are selected and received by speaking subjects, lost in the materiality of language rather than the concepts it produces. In Nekrasov’s *poema* the difference between what we might call content and form inscribes a difference between “happy songs” and tragedy. As much as realism is shaped by imperatives to “race through discourse,” (one thinks of Pisarev’s comment about “wasting time in forms”), it also dwells within them. As George Levine describes it, “realism exists as a process, responsive to the changing nature of reality as culture understood it, and evoking with each question another question to be questioned, each threatening to destroy that quest beyond words, against literature: that is its most distinguishing feature.”<sup>384</sup> Such remarks are uniquely fitting for a work that poses in its title a question that produces no ultimate answers. Instead, in the space of the crowded road, *Komu na Rusi* generates “voices” quite different from the solitary image – conjured in the apostrophe to Rus-matushka – of Grisha’s song. Only in this song does the peasant’s voice emerge, marking the limit of representation and suggesting that there exists something unified within language and the world it represents. As Levine suggests, the strongest argument *for* literature is an inversion of this promise: the admission that literature is knowingly trapped in its own forms.

What I describe as the energy of form is generated in Nekrasov’s *poema* in two distinct ways: effects of “noise” and storytelling. Both devices deconstruct unities which are established in “hinge” moments – between knowing everything and being nothing – and through mediations,

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<sup>383</sup> Peter Brooks, “The Storyteller,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 1 (Fall 1987), p. 28.

<sup>384</sup> George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterly*. (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 22. For recent reflections on the self-conscious nature of the realist project (as one of mediation and representation), see Beaumont, Matthew (ed.), *A Concise Companion to Realism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

returning them to a flow of exchange in which every statement may be interrupted by another. I begin with a scene that thematizes noise in reference to stereotypes of the peasant and in contrast to another figure who, like Grisha, attempts to silence him; this is an ethnographer who transcribes peasant songs and admonishes them for drinking. Emerging as a response to this admonition, noise is developed in devices throughout the *poema* which collapse boundaries between word and object; narrative past and speaking present.

When the ethnographer, Veretennikov, issues his admonishment, a character named Yakim snatches Veretennikov's pen from his hand, and states his case: a rupture between the written and spoken word. In the long monologue that follows, Yakim posits labor and alcohol as the two indistinguishable poles of peasant life. At its conclusion, he invites "you, kingdom of peasants, drunk and hatless," to "make noise," something Veretennikov cannot transcribe. Establishing a binary between speech and writing, this monologue also reflects on two peasant stereotypes, drinking and working, in striking ways. Themes of peasant life thus far encountered are drawn together; suffice it to recall the tavern scene from "Pevtsy" in *Zapiski okhotnika* and the mowing scene from *Anna Karenina*. If Nekrasov sought to mitigate negative stereotypes (alcoholism) by appealing to positive ones (labor), he ends up equating them.<sup>385</sup>

As Yakim describes it, labor does not rejuvenate bodies or build lasting structures. In labor, strength is not stored, it's taken. This produces an essential negativity – a life lived in debt before it even begins – of which drinking is only the expression. Such nihilistic revelry that blurs the boundaries of sense so that poetic intoxication is literalized as commonplace inebriation.<sup>386</sup> As Yakim describes it, drinking gives voice to the otherwise silenced landscape of labor and, in the process, collapses distinctions between past and present. In another scene, labor is described in precisely these terms:

«Ай, молодец, Трофим!  
Не знаешь сам, что сделал ты:  
Ты снес один по крайности  
Четырнадцать пудов!»  
Ой знаю! Сердце молотом  
Стучит в груди, кровавые  
В глазах круги стоят (3:208).<sup>387</sup>

By filling in his silent past with exclamations in the present ("and he put them on me, the scoundrel!" [*i polozhil, podlets!*]), this speaker blends direct address with the narrative past.

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<sup>385</sup> In another demonstration of the transformations of the labor stereotype in Nekrasov's poetry, Richard Gregg makes the case that in *Moroz – Krasnyi nos*, labor is valorized not because it renews but because it promises death as final rest. "Dar'ia's Secret: Or What Happens in *Moroz, Krasnyi Nos*," *Slavic Review*, vol. 45, no. 1 (1986), pp. 38-48.

<sup>386</sup> Northrop Frye writes that poetry assumes a verbal reality, one that is, over time, filtered by the concept-based abstractions of prosaic language: "...he poet, in the ancient phrase, unlocks the word-hoard, but the word-hoard is not a cupboard: it is something more like a world that our senses have filtered out, and only poets can bring to awareness. <...> we must soon leave [that world] if we are to retain our reputations as sober witnesses of the ordinary one. "Theory of Genres," *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 34.

<sup>387</sup> [Well done, my brave fellow! / You don't know yourself / What you've been doing! / It's forty stone, Trifon, / You've carried up there! / I *did* know; my heart / Struck my breast like a hammer, / The blood stood in circles / Round my eyes] (Soskice, p. 141, translation modified.)

Yakim contends that drinking is only one way of expressing the knowledge acquired in labor, through knocking hearts and blood-filled eyes, of death's proximity. A sense of immediacy commonly associated with poetic statements here merges with the finality of the narrative past. Instead of gaining the insight of absolute knowledge in death, these reflections, stressing a point of overlap between labor and drink, suggest that death's presence within life does not stabilize meaning but overturns it.

At the conclusion of his speech, Yakim is asked to give his name and he responds with an epitaph, interring himself as a character in someone else's story: "Пиши: «В деревне Басове / Яким Нагой живет, / Он до смерти работает, / До полусмерти пьет!»" [Write it down: / In Barefoot the village / Lives Yakim the Naked, / He'll work till he's dead / And drink till he's half-dead] (3:201). After making his case for his own essential negativity, however, the crowd discloses something about his character that undermines it. Yakim is drawn back into the realm of mediation; we are told that he treasures little pictures (*kartiniki*) bought from village fairs and once saved these pictures from a fire instead of his money or icons; neither wealth nor religion move Yakim beyond his nihilism – his insistence on "noise" rather than meaning. Instead, it is precisely the echo of a discursive realm – written rather than oral – from which Yakim cannot detach. Only at this point does Veretennikov look boldly at Yakim, his pen, as it were, having been returned. Under Veretennikov's gaze, Yakim, this erst-while emissary of noise, is silenced into a picture of Mother Earth: his wrinkles turn into cracks in the earth, his neck into clay, his hands, tree bark: "И сам на землю матушку / Похож он..." [And he himself / Looked like Mother Nature] (3:201).

By turning the site of labor – so often imagined as a perpetually rejuvenating force of nature – into a confrontation with death and depletion, Yakim seems to dissolve the ground that realists stood upon. In binding that confrontation together with noise, he also seems to replace voice as the core of language with a vacant center. Though that center is vacant, it is far from silent. Instead, the language produced from this place, thematized by Yakim, is emphatically material, from volalic cries – "Эй, полюби меня! / Меня, простоволосую, / Хмельную бабу, старую, / Зааа-паааа-чканную!..." [Heu, love me! / Me, this simple-headed / Drunken old peasant woman / And filthy!] – to groans which hang in the air: "И стон стоном стоял!" [And a groan like any groan reverberated!] (3:195). From vowels which overstep consonantal "stops" and groans which draw internal energy from an elongated "o," the materiality of noise contrasts with the imagined earthiness of Yakim's image.

The difference between sound's material nature, expressed by Yakim, and the image of Mother Earth imposed on him, is that the former implies possibility by means of abstraction or potential, and the latter insists on the limitations of embodiment. Based in the expressivity of self-destruction, "noise" does not impose limits on itself. To the contrary, the limitations of embodiment are taken as an impetus to extend oneself beyond reason: a vowel that never stops, work and drink that are unmeasured, and inversions of metaphoric and literal meaning that keep language and reality in an endless interplay. Opening out death into life, noise nevertheless lends an energy to language, bridging the worlds of living and dead; animate and inanimate. Language takes on a life of its own in a world where "life" establishes no fundamental basis. In this way, metaphors may be literalized and return to the object-world, suggesting, in Northrop Frye's words, "that verbal reality *is* reality." "Мужик ревет над ободом, / «Вязовую дубиною» / Ругает драчуна" [A peasant howled at the rim / "You blockhead!" / He cursed the rogue] (3:187). Here, a piece of wood is called, metaphorically, a piece of wood. Words and their referents change places in a poetic intoxication that encodes the lessons set forth by Yakim: at the core of "reality" is an essential emptiness where all forms are generated.

In this movement between language and reality – contrasted by those images of Mother Nature and Rus-matushka which insist on the distinction – physical embodiment takes on a wider meaning. Here, the themes of Nekrasov’s earlier poetry illuminate the interconnection between form and fatalism: one speaks in so many forms – finding oneself at times trapped in clichés – because those forms are as inescapable as the fact of embodiment. From this perspective, vocalic cries do not exceed language but emblemize one’s entrapment in it. For example, a satirized character, Obolt-Obolduev, descends into unintelligible sounds as he loses himself in memories of hunting and forgets his audience: “Эй! улю-лю! родимые! / Эй! - улю-лю!.. а-ту!..” (3:231). Satire is nevertheless balanced by sincerity, and Obolt-Obolduev’s inability to be other than he is recalls the drama, familiar from Nekrasov’s early poetry, of failing to exceed oneself and, at the same time, speaking for the crowd that does the same. In the end, Obolt-Obolduev has no control of what happens to his words, but he also has no control of the fact that words have shaped him.

Rather than exceeding the strictures of language, these examples highlight that those strictures are unavoidable. Indeed, being trapped in form is the pathos of reality poetry, which seeks to establish itself in some external reference point. Ginzburg describes realist poetry in terms of the unstylized word, and what is revealing about this description is that it depends on acts of negation: words can be unstylized, but they cannot be without style.<sup>388</sup> One might imagine that the act of destylizing takes place in those moments of transition – when reality is caught in passing. The difference between freezing that moment into a word without style and performing the transition captures the confrontation between Yakim and Veretennikov. Where the latter brings the energy of form to rest in an image that reconciles opposites, the former tears down meaning as soon as it is uttered.

To those who would search for a social form to fulfill the promise of “living well,” the *poema* seems ready to answer with the instability of all forms. As Ekaterina Sazhenina observes, the titular question frames the *poema*’s preoccupation with storytelling: a person’s happiness cannot be stated outright or debated; it is only a story that can be told.<sup>389</sup> Happiness comes and goes, but it cannot be captured, and more important are the tales that derive from posing the question in the first place. Just as noise seems to exceed language, orality is conceptualized as a representational limit-point that, in turn, can establish a ground for “voice” as the potential that exists outside the realm of forms. Such limit-points are drawn within *Komu na Rusi* – but they are also collapsed. For example, when a voice interrupts the narrator’s digression about peasants’ taste in literature to ask for directions to the puppet-theatre, this form of popular entertainment seems to verify the narrator’s complaints about low and high art. Underlying the contrast is the distinction between written and oral forms, for as the scene shifts to the puppet-theatre, the raucous crowd heckles the performers, adding lines to the script, some of which are described as “too vivid for print” (3:191). In another scene, ineffability is literalized as mundane illiteracy when “God’s great letter” (*gramota*) is described as unreadable and drawn in parallel to the emancipation edict (*gramota*). In both cases, what lies beyond the remit of the *poema* is not endowed with greater significance.

Although effects of audience participation and contextualization are associated with oral genres, they are not necessarily limited to them, a point on which Brooks insists in his reading of Walter Benjamin’s well-known essay.<sup>390</sup> Though Benjamin suggests that in a pre-modern past, the art of storytelling thrived because society was neither alienated from their own experiences nor remote from the reality of death, he also makes a more subtle case for modern art’s potential

<sup>388</sup> Ginzburg, *O lirike*, p. 203.

<sup>389</sup> E. V. Sazhenina, “Komu na Rusi zhit’ khorosho N. A. Nekrasova: k vorprosu o realizme poeticheskogo vyskazyvaniia,” *Karabikha: istoriko-literaturnyi sborik* (2016), 114.

<sup>390</sup> Brooks, “The Storyteller,” pp. 21-38.

return to “contextualized language,” Brooks contends. Brooks’s argument suggests a connection between the pathos of form’s entrapment and the motif of storytelling that brings the mystique of the peasant in Russian realism closer to forms of modernity to which it was opposed. Just as noise is thematized precisely in its boundedness to language, drawing physical embodiment in relation to linguistic entrapment, devices of storytelling throughout the *poema* need not be read as vestiges, authentic or stylized, of a pre-modern past. Rather, these devices underscore the older theme in Nekrasov’s poetry of erasing the boundary between the poet and his crowd.

As before, what extends across lines of representation is a pervasive sense of limit: the poet in his forms, the audience to their embodied lives. In *Komu na Rusi zhit’ khorosho*, this link is established in relation to the leitmotif of death. In one story from “Schastlivye” [The Happy Ones], a teller begins his tale in an unusual way, where death comes at the beginning. He recounts a train ride filled with passengers, including himself, fatally ill and on their way home to die. In the train’s feverish atmosphere, the teller loses consciousness and imagines slitting the throats of geese, as he did in childhood, only to wake up to imagine that he had murdered his fellow passengers. It is not until the end of the story that listeners are – albeit warily – able to distinguish fact from fantasy, and the destabilized boundary between them extends to draw the storytelling present into the narrative past. Following Brooks’s interpretation, when Benjamin writes of “the warmth” we draw from the death that surrounds characters – particularly those characters in a novel – and never our own, he does not mean that modern experiences are no longer as meaningful as they once were, or that death delivers totalizing narratives.<sup>391</sup> Rather, stories offer propositions on which others may build and audiences stand to recognize in stories fates which may as well be theirs.

Establishing connections between audience and story has the effect of reanimating aesthetic experience as social experience, a topic of central concern to nineteenth-century aesthetics and present in Russian realism’s conflicting impulses, epitomized in Nekrasov’s poetry, to speak for the other and for oneself. Speaking for oneself, I have argued, expresses a form of sociality that contrasts to those based on images of collective voice and objective reality. Much like Benjamin’s account of the storyteller, the poet who speaks for himself engages the worlds that have shaped him and provokes the involvement of his listeners. What the comparison highlights is Nekrasov’s response to imperatives to access society through self-sacrifice rather than self-expression.

In his concern to return the experience of art to that of social exchange, Benjamin develops ideas expressed in nineteenth-century aesthetics as responses to the demand that art maintain reflective distance from its objects. If artists overcome themselves in order to reflect a more inclusive reality, one that is no longer internally linked to themselves through mythologies or ideals, and if audiences are tasked to do the same by discerning that reality apart from what it might mean to them, it is naturally difficult to see how art functions in social experience at all.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov,” *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections by Walter Benjamin*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 86.

<sup>392</sup> Much of this critique cites Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* (1790) as its target, though this work is also considered the first aesthetic theory to seek to establish aesthetic judgment as a means of unifying opposed realms. Jason Gaiger, “The Aesthetics of Kant and Hegel,” *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. by Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 136-140. One source of the critique as it has impacted current critical paradigms comes from Adorno, who claims: “If [art] is more than mere indifference, the Kantian “without interest” must be shadowed by the wildest interest, and there is much to be said for the idea that the dignity of the artworks depends on the intensity of the interest from which they are wrested. Kant denies this in favor of the concept of freedom that castigates as heteronomous

On the reflective model, art offers itself as an object that, through mediation, diffuse the vagaries that went into it and the particular interests it may spark.<sup>393</sup> Certain features of European romanticism such as the grotesque may be read as responses to this wide-spread demand by seeking “to redeem those areas of the soul that good taste had deemed necessary to exclude from aesthetic participation.”<sup>394</sup> One common reference point in the concern of art’s decreased sociality is the famous “end of art” thesis in Hegel’s *Lectures on Fine Art*.<sup>395</sup> Scholars debate the nature of this thesis, though many agree that Hegel saw the end of art’s predominance in society as ritual or social function as auguring a new art, valuable in a new way for its basis in reflective distance. Some scholars even find a theory *avant la lettre* for modernism; the artist who has no specific attachment to his material, form becomes valuable for its own sake.<sup>396</sup> In mid-century Russian realism, it is precisely such formalism that comes under attack, though not, in the end, for the sake of social experience. Indeed, it was the opposite impulse—to distance art from forms as from a certain relationship to the social—that realism insisted on content.

Against this background, scenes of oral exchange in *Komu na Rusi zhit’ khorosho* may be illuminated as meditations on literature as open to exchange rather than insulated from it, and as insistent on its own constructed nature. The same lesson applies to the myth of the peasant as an immediate social form. Building on themes of Nekrasov’s poetry from the 1850s, *Komu na Rusi* radicalizes its implications by drawing one sort of crowd close to its opposite. Established as a threat in Nekrasov’s folk stylizations, this merger renders language at once historical and natural insofar as both are underwritten by death, the melting away of all forms and their replacement by new ones. Such is the contrast to the stability sought in any single form, the effort to transform it into content-without-form.

E. M. Forster writes of stories that they show “not why things happen, but that they do,” a distinction which functions for Benjamin to underscore irrevocability as the primary insight of storytelling.<sup>397</sup> Asking why things happen, by contrast, leads to the belief that events of the past can be altered if only they are differently understood. Such is the dream of rationality – that element of Russian realism sharpened in the sixties. Challenges to this dream in *Komu na Rusi zhit’ khorosho* offer a release from the demands of self-sacrifice, couched within the voice of the peasant. That voice stands for the real that exists beyond death, somewhere at the end of history.

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whatever is not born exclusively of the subject.” *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (New York: Continuum, 1997), p. 11. Recent work redresses some of these critiques, including Michel Chaouli, *Thinking with Kant’s Critique of Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 25-32; and Robert Kaufman, “Everybody Hates Kant: Blakean Formalism and the Symmetries of Laura Moriarty,” *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 1 (2000), pp. 131-155.

<sup>393</sup> A diminished sense of involvement in art is attributed to a shift in focus on the spectator in the nineteenth century. Williams, for example, discusses the shift in the meaning of literature from *poiesis* (active creation) to *literature* (literacy, reading, passive reception). *Marxism and Literature*, pp. 46-7.

<sup>394</sup> Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, trans. by Georgia Albert (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 20.

<sup>395</sup> Allen Speight, “Hegel and the ‘Historical Deduction’ of the Concept of Art,” *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. by Stephen Houlgate, Michael Baur (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 356-360.

<sup>396</sup> Robert Pippin, “What Was Abstract Art? (From the Point of View of Hegel),” in *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 279-306.

<sup>397</sup> E. M. Forster, “Story and Plot” in *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure, and Frames*. Ed. Brian Richardson. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2002), pp. 71-73. Reprinted from *Aspects of the Novel*, (New York: Harcourt, 1927). In Jameson extends Benjamin’s critique of the novel in terms of the reversal of Forster’s claims (or rather his values), developing the storytelling and novel opposition into an opposition within the novel itself between what he calls pure narrative and affect. *Antinomies of Realism*, pp. 15-26.

It is precisely in the peasant's voice that Nekrasov seeks escape from its demands. For realists, peasant voice was irrational only because it was real, the content which must be channeled by its self-conscious mediators. Yet the version of reality that voice is meant to suppress – one of forms that fade away but are not overcome – is also found within it.

It remains to be seen whether the narrator of *Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho* brings to rest the chaos of noise and storytelling into a resilient optimism, as Korman contends. Following Korman's contention, E. V. Sazhenina argues that the narrator distinguished himself from the world he depicts by embedding his own lyrical plot.<sup>398</sup> Thus, she interprets various asides as adding to the characters' world a degree of reflection and abstraction that lifts them out of it. One such aside from the narrator appears in the prologue and inaugurates the *poema*.

Ой, тени! тени черные  
Кого вы не нагоните?  
Кого не перегоните?  
Вас только, тени черные  
Нельзя поймать — обнять! (3:161).<sup>399</sup>

The narrator's address, according to Sazhenina, "transforms ordinary peasants into pilgrims," for a larger vision impels them from above. However, rather than establishing a stance that is distinct from an ordinary (not to say mortal) world, these lines dwell on that world's essential reality. Ever-present and unconquerable, the shadow is a symbol of death. From this perspective, the narrator's realm is not a distant place where conflicts are resolved, nor a wider vision to which characters, wrapped up in themselves, cannot see. Rather, the narrator only effects a direct confrontation with those shadows that follow his characters; here is another merger of poetic statement and narrative where neither builds aesthetic unities of their own.

When Nekrasov creates a narrative world from within the ideology of peasant voice and that of intellectual interventionism, that world moves closer to the themes of the failed citizen, the unrecognized poet, and the distracted and diverted crowd of his earlier work. It becomes less a salve to unmoored identities than a reflection of them. A fundamental binary is brought to bear: the narrator against a tragic world, the intelligentsia against a fatalistic one, and stability sought amid the changes bursting within its constructs. Yet the border is not absolute. If there is energy in change, in hinge moments where reality emerges like an admonition or when it is already too late, that energy comes at least in part from the fact of passage itself. For it is in the end of one form and the beginning of another that reality shows itself not as a singular construct, but as so many passing forms.

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<sup>398</sup> E. V. Sazhenina, "Liricheskaia sobytiinost' v poeme N. A. Nekrasova "Komu na Rusi zhit' khorosho," in *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, vol. 385 (2014), pp. 42-9.

<sup>399</sup> [O shadows, black shadows! / Who can outrun you / Who can escape you? / No one can catch you / Entice or embrace you!] (Soskice, 31).



## Concluding Remarks

“Forms of the Peasant” offers an interpretation of Russian realism’s preoccupation reality as openended and unfinalized that inverts its apparent meaning. The peasant’s image functions, paradoxically, to transform a sense of fleetingness into a stable image. That image serves, in turn, to distinguish national particularity and express a self-determined subject, where the “content” of the nation and of the self appears beyond capture of conventional categories. What is, in fact, indeterminate, is form, that index of the conventional and the historically entrapped. I conclude with a reading of Dostoevsky’s “Muzhik Marei” [The Peasant Marei] (1876) as a story that follows this familiar pattern, transforming the transience of form into the content of the peasant’s image. In this story, Dostoevsky reminisces about his time in prison, and recalls how he remembered once, while lying on his cot, a peasant from his childhood. As a memory within a memory, this story also explores themes of temporality, manifest in narrative form, that bring history into view as the central focus of the peasant myth.

“Muzhik Marei” appears in the February 1876 edition of *Dnevnik pisatel'ia* [A Writer’s Diary], a project of Dostoevsky’s that began as a column in a literary journal, *Grazhdanin* [The Citizen] in 1873. The *Diary*’s aim, Dostoevsky wrote, was to deliver the essential reality of contemporary life as he believed only literature could.<sup>400</sup> Echoing the ethos of the age, Dostoevsky professed that only the artistic vision of the writer, “the poet” in a general sense, could penetrate life’s surface to reveal its inner truths. By the end of 1875, the column achieved wide readership and became an autonomous monthly publication, broadening its aim to reveal the complexity of topical events as only the writer could. The result is what Gary Saul Morson calls a boundary work: a mixture of journalism, autobiography, fiction, and essays.<sup>401</sup>

In “Muzhik Marei,” the writer’s project to access the real finds particular purpose in elevating the peasantry from its less essential appearances. In addition, Dostoevsky’s project in “Muzhik Marei” is nothing less than a revaluation of time from causal sequence to simultaneity. Simultaneity describes a particular aspect of Dostoevsky’s poetics as Bakhtin and others describe it. Rather than narrating events in an evolving, linear sequence, Dostoevsky gives us the cross-section of a single moment, layered with a character’s thoughts that ramify in dialogue.<sup>402</sup> On a narrative level, we might conceive of the tension of linearity and simultaneity as one between casual sequence and a pattern that magnifies the content of linear trajectories, interweaving layers of meaning into each moment. In “Muzhik Marei,” such a pattern may be described as iteratism, a mode of narration that searches for analogies between moments in order to remove the narrative from a progression of linear sequence.<sup>403</sup> Associated with the workings of memory, iteratism describes the capacity to slip from linearity into a deeper experience of the real.

“Muzhik Marei” begins as a memory of Dostoevsky’s time in Omsk prison, and specifically, the Easter holiday of 1850. In this story, iterative narrative serves the particular function of contrast, intensifying the habitual, stagnating, and properly historical temporality that is associated with prison. In prison, time becomes a measure of punishment. It unfolds from one moment to the next, rigidly affixed to “the straight line of time,” where its subjects are sunk

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<sup>400</sup> Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*, vol. 21, p. 5. Subsequent citations of Dostoevsky’s PSS are cited parenthetically in the text by volume and page number.

<sup>401</sup> Gary Saul Morson, “An Introductory Study,” in *A Writer’s Diary*, vol. 1 1873-1876, trans. by Kenneth Lantz (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press), pp 9-10.

<sup>402</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis/London: Minnesota University Press, 1984), p. 28.

<sup>403</sup> Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980) p. 113.

within the rhythm of habit.<sup>404</sup> According to the logic of iteratism (and, in Dostoevsky's story, according to the sensibility of renewal with which it is associated), the Easter holiday ought to facilitate the escape from habit, whereby celebrants remember a given year's holiday in connection with previous years, and each holiday is defined by its connection to the past which it commemorates.

It is precisely such a long view of time that iteratism captures, focusing on formulaic abstractions into which particular events can be categorized, e.g., Easters, everyday, Saturdays. Such a focus is expressed in grammatical terms by the imperfective verbal aspect, which is used for describing repeated or habitual actions and emphasizing continuity. (Imperfectivity is expressed in English with habitual and progressive tenses, e.g., "he used to say" [habitual] and "he was saying" [progressive].) Written in the spirit of imperfectivity, iterative narrative tells not "what happened" but "what used to happen."<sup>405</sup>

*Я пробрался на свое место, против окна с железной решеткой, и лег навзничь, закинув руки за голову и закрыв глаза. Я **любил** так лежать: к спящему не пристанут, а меж тем можно мечтать и думать (22:46-7).*<sup>406</sup>

In this passage, the narrative shifts from one-time actions (I laid down) to habitual actions (I [used to] love to lie like that). In this grammatical shift, the narrative also shifts from describing a single event to moving between moments during "my four years in prison." A traditional, non-iterative narrative might begin in the iterative mode with descriptions of habits and rituals of every Saturday, for example, transitioning to the linear by way of accordance ("and thus [on this Saturday]") or by way of deviation ("but now [on this Saturday]").<sup>407</sup> Iteratism, by contrast, emerges when habitual actions overwhelm linearity, and even one-time events are described in their relation to their past and future iterations.

The difference between the habit that defines what we might call prison time and the habitual continuity that is part of iteratism depends on the fact that iteratism is born of sudden, involuntary memories; a sense of continuity, of the oneness of all things, comes like a shock to the ordinary. Iteratism is thus closely associated with conversion, opening toward a "deeper" continuity that, unlike prison habit, is neither conventional nor imposed but is rather natural, familiar, and fulfilling.<sup>408</sup> In grammatical terms, imperfective verbs prepare the ground for memory, and memory continues the proliferation of imperfectivity. As Gérard Genette describes it, iteratism offers a "window into an external period of time."<sup>409</sup> Such is the escape, prepared for by changes in narrative temporality, that Dostoevsky's imprisoned narrator seeks.

It is thus first in narration, and then in the mind of the narrator, that this miserable Easter day in prison, as well as the convicts who desacralize it, are brought into relationship with a

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<sup>404</sup> J. P. Houston, "Temporal Patterns in *À La Recherche Du Temps Perdu*," *French Studies*, vol. 16 (1962), p. 35.

<sup>405</sup> Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, pp. 115-6.

<sup>406</sup> The italicized verbs are in the Russian perfective and the emboldened verbs are imperfective; this notation highlights the shift, at the grammatical level, from linear to iterative narration. [I made my way to my bunk opposite a window with an iron grating and lay down on my back, my hands behind my head, and closed my eyes. I liked to lie like that: a sleeping man was left alone, while at the same time one could daydream and think.] Trans. by Kenneth Lantz, p. 352. Subsequent translations cited in text.

<sup>407</sup> Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 132.

<sup>408</sup> On conversion in "Muzhik Marei," see Robin Feuer Miller, *Dostoevsky's Unfinished Journey* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 1-21.

<sup>409</sup> *ibid.*, 156.

series of “peasant” that renews them. Iteratism performs a unifying function that serves as the basis for the reestablishment of the peasant’s image in the minds of those who have lost it and, in that loss, history is conceptualized as an abstract whole according to which all separate parts are ultimately defined, and not as passing stream in which one is affixed now to one moment, and now to the next. Though the convict-peasants emblemize the disunity of prison time, Dostoevsky seeks to single out educated observers as those who are trapped within a perspective that sees them that way. Indeed, this is the point that Dostoevsky intends to make with “Muzhik Marei,” which he states at the outset:

В русском человеке из простонародья нужно уметь отвлекать красоту его от наносного варварства. ... Повторяю: судите русский народ не по тем мерзостям, которые он так часто делает, а по тем великим и святым вещам, по которым он и в самой мерзости своей постоянно вздыхает. ... Но все эти *professions de fois* я думаю, очень скучно читать, а потому расскажу один анекдот ... (22:43/347-51).<sup>410</sup>

Trapped in prison time, peasants desacralize the Easter holiday and revel in a celebration that devolves into “hideous songs” (reminiscent of Turgenev’s “Petvsi”), but Dostoevsky insists that this view is the result of the observer’s own entrapment. The narrative he offers is intended to resolve what he describes as an apparent contradiction of (we might say) Russian realism’s peasant myth. Beneath the convict-peasant there lies an ideal, and to access that ideal, one must abandon *profession de fois* for literature.

Indeed, the resolution of contradiction comes when the narrator escapes prison time without escaping prison. He discovers its deeper reality in a dream-like memory. Retreating to his bunk to escape the convicts’ revelry, the narrator remembers a peasant named Marei from his childhood. Running from those woods for fear of a wolf (interpreted by some scholars as the peasant in his convict-guise), the narrator remembers finding safety in the caresses of Marei, who is plowing in the nearby fields.<sup>411</sup> Performing the gesture that, on Easter, the convicts were not, Marei makes the sign of the cross on the child’s forehead.

If the peasant’s image (the one more real than his reality) saves the narrator of “Muzhik Marei,” it does so with the help of literature, conceived, as it had been for all the writers under study, as an essence uniquely bound to the peasantry for its expression of a national tradition, a union of self and other that supercedes society, and a reflective capacity that enables access to reality through mediation. In “Muzhik Marei,” the memory of Marei is contextualized by the narrator’s habit of remembering which is described in artistic terms:<sup>412</sup>

Эти воспоминания вставали сами, я редко вызывал их по своей воле. Начиналось с какой-нибудь точки, черты, иногда неприметной, и потом мало-помалу вырасталось целую картину, в какое-нибудь сильное и цельное впечатление. Я анализировал эти впечатления, придавал новые черты уже давно прожитому и, главное,

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<sup>410</sup> [One must know how to segregate the beauty in the Russian peasant from the layers of barbarity that have accumulated over it. ... I repeat: judge the Russian people not by the abominations they so frequently commit, but by those great and sacred things for which, even in their abominations, they constantly yearn. But reading all these *professions de foi* is a bore, I think, and so I’ll tell you a story...]

<sup>411</sup> Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal: 1850-1859* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 119-20.

<sup>412</sup> On the figurations of art in “Muzhik Marei,” see Robert Louis Jackson, *Art of Dostoevsky: Deliriums and Nocturnes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981)

поправлял его, поправлял беспрерывно, в этом состояла вся забава моя  
(22:47/353).<sup>413</sup>

Artistic vision and, by extension, literature, coaxes forth the essence of reality, submitting to the memories of childhood, reminiscent of Turgenev's vision of origin and place; creating, like the Tolstoyan novel, a union of master and serf, and, like Nekrasov's lyric subjects, turning a groan into a song.

The emphatically involuntary nature of the narrator's memory in "Muzhik Marei" performs a crucial function in distinguishing "invented" from "real." The story concludes with the lament that non-Russians "had it worse, for they had no memories of any Mareis." Voluntary imaging, as Dostoevsky elaborates in another column from *Dnevnik pisatel'ia*, renders art forcibly constructed: "Nothing at all is explained; there is no historical truth" (21:68). By contrast, a personal memory that is experienced as a sudden transport to the past imbues art with immediacy and authenticity. In the same column, Dostoevsky makes the case for the untranslatability of national languages. He argues that without memories of any Mareis (for example) in which the national language is steeped, one can never sufficiently penetrate its meaning. Personal memory thus becomes the memory of nation, possessed by a distinctive subject that has access to its own store of experiences beyond the "voluntary" imaginings imposed upon it.

Thus, in "Muzhik Marei," one view of history interacts with another: historical truth emerges from prison time as the true history that is drawn from personal memory. That history does not come from the flow of time, but from time's deepening, as it is performed by literature. Literature thus seems to turn history into an open-ended moment as well as a stable, unbreakable continuum. Yet we have seen that the open-endedness that is celebrated in such texts as "Muzhik Marei" is undermined when openendedness comes to be seen not as an index of concrete reality, but as the nature of history in a very different sense: an unbreakable continuum, to be sure, but one that ensures no stability.

In a sense, iteratism is close to this sense of history that informs my exploration of Russian realism. One finds it expressed in the final lines of "Muzhik Marei": "Этот обритый и шельмованный мужик, с клеймами на лице и хмельной, орущий свою пьяную сиплую песню, ведь это тоже, может быть, тот же самый Марей: ведь я же не могу заглянуть в его сердце" [This disgraced peasant, with shaven head and brands on his cheek, drunk and roaring out his hoarse, drunken song—why he might also be that very same Marei; I cannot peer into his heart, after all] (22:49/355). The past interacts with the present and in that interaction, what appears to be "content," e.g., the convict who is standing before us, is only a form, e.g., he, too, could be Marei. The difference, however, is that Dostoevsky's exposition depends on establishing Marei as a contentful image in itself; Marei, like Platon, is one token of an essential type, serving as a code that translates all the passing phenomena of life into a singular essence.

I have argued that the peasant's image performs this task to stabilize history because it touches on the "social ground" of literature in the three frameworks proposed by Jameson in *The Political Unconscious*: political history (serfdom's abolition), society (tensions of master and serf) and, finally, history itself, a force of necessity which Russian realists consistently seek to transform into its opposite: the "eternal present" of Turgenev's descriptive passages; the master

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<sup>413</sup> [These memories arose in my mind of themselves; rarely did I summon them up consciously. They would begin from a certain point, some little thing that was often barely perceptible, and then bit by bit they would grow into a finished picture, some strong and complete impression. I would analyze these impressions, adding new touches to things experienced long ago; and the main thing was that I would refine them, continually refine them, and in this consisted my entire entertainment]

and serf connection in Tolstoy's novels; the motif of death's release in Nekrasov's poetry. Just as consistently, however, these foundations erode back into the flow of necessity and the image stabilized on the face of transience dissolves back into that same transience. When this happens, the eternal present becomes dependent on those distant patterns and expectations that make it intelligible; master and serf entanglements reveal the objecthood of the master; and moments glimpsed in dying, between "seeing everything" and being nothing, are reanimated, producing more such transitions, but promising no end. Dostoevsky, and all the realists studied in this dissertation, hoped that literature could escape history. Only literature, I have argued, could make the more radical claim that there is no such escape.

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