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Money and Mad Ambition:  
Economies of Russian Literature 1830-1850

By

Jillian Elizabeth Porter

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requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
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in the  
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of the  
University of California, Berkeley

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Economies of Russian Literature 1830-1850

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## Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Slavic Languages and Literatures

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This dissertation offers a sustained examination of the economic paradigms that structure meaning and narrative in Russian literature of the 1830s-1840s, the formative years of nineteenth-century Russian prose. Exploring works by Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Faddei Bulgarin, I view tropes such as spending, counterfeiting, hoarding, and gambling, as well as plots of mad or blocked ambition, in relation to the cultural and economic history of Nicholas I's reign and in the context of the importation of economic discourse and literary conventions from abroad. Furthermore, I consider the impact of culturally and economically conditioned affects—ambition, avarice, and embarrassment—on narrative tone. From the post-Revolutionary French plot of social ambition to the classic character type of the miser, the western economic models Russian writers routinely invoked seemed strangely out of place in Russia's autocratic and serf-based society. At a historical moment when the question of Russian specificity was frequently posed with reference to Europe, and the modern European discourses of aesthetics, the emotions, and political economy were solidifying in opposition to one another, Russian writers made prolific and paradoxical use of economic paradigms to explore the role of literature and the nature of feeling in a society in which the state, rather than the bourgeoisie, was the primary motor of history. Incorporating the perspectives of New Economic Criticism as well as the history of emotions, *Money and Mad Ambition* strives to account for the interrelationship between Russian literature and economics in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

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On a more personal note, I would like to thank my parents and grandparents for all their love and support over the years. Their commitment not only to my education, but to the very idea of education in general, has been and remains for me a powerful source of motivation. I also owe many special debts to my wife, Hannah Freed-Thall. Restricting mention of them to the few most pertinent here, I thank her for the wonderful ideas and meals she has shared with me; the comments and criticisms she has offered on my writing; and, at the final hour, her willingness to wade through mysterious Russian titles to help compile my bibliography.

Notwithstanding all the help I have received on this project, any remaining mistakes are, of course, my own.

## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION, TRANSLATION, AND SOURCES

Transliterations throughout this dissertation follow the Library of Congress system, except when an anglicized name has been established by tradition (e.g. Gogol, Dostoevsky). In the Bibliography, however, I follow the LOC system for all Russian names.

I have made minor changes to older Russian texts, consistent with modern orthography: For instance, I have changed “iat” to “e” and “i” to “и,” and have removed “hard signs” from the ends of words.

For all citations from Russian, I provide both the original text and English translations. For citations from foreign languages other than Russian, I provide English translations and the original text only when it is of particular linguistic or literary interest. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. When I have used existing translations, I have occasionally modified them and marked such changes in the Notes.

## INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I explore several of the fundamental discursive and economic contradictions permeating Russian literature and society in the 1830s-1840s, years that witnessed Pushkin's turn to prose, the full breadth of Gogol's literary career, and Dostoevsky's debut as a writer.<sup>1</sup> My overarching aim is to understand the relationship between Russian literature and economics in this period. I ask why economic plots and paradigms proved so productive of narratives in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and furthermore, why Russian authors routinely used economic metaphors to figure the writing, reading, and interpretation of literature. For example, in Alexander Pushkin's "The Queen of Spades" ("Pikovaia dama," 1834), gambling structures the story cyclically and serves as a master trope that figures the endless turns of Pushkin's narrative game; in Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* (*Mertvye dushi*, 1842), the hero Chichikov's accumulation of dead serfs' names not only structures the plot, but also figures Gogol's authorial accumulation of signs without referents; and in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Double*, the hero Goliadkin's frantic spending of devalued paper currency drives the narrative in a series of fits and starts, erodes the distinction between signs of value and their counterfeits, and undermines the credibility of early Realist claims to linguistic referentiality.

Exploring these and other works, I rely on the theoretical insights of Marc Shell and Jean-Joseph Goux, pioneers of a movement that has come to be called New Economic Criticism, as one point of departure.<sup>2</sup> In particular, I have been inspired by Shell's argument that literary texts are "economies" made up of "small tropic exchanges or metaphors, some of which can be analyzed in terms of signified economic content and all of which can be analyzed in terms of economic form," and his suggestion that critics work to identify "the relation between such literary exchanges and the exchanges that constitute the political economy."<sup>3</sup> By analyzing the shared logic of linguistic and monetary values, Shell and Goux have shown that literary texts, whether they deal explicitly with economic themes or not, can be productively analyzed in connection with both the literariness of economic discourse and the facts of material economic history. Because the period of Russian literature at issue here is one that is marked by an explicitly economic orientation, contextualizing it with reference to the prevailing economic conditions and discourses with which it engages appears especially necessary. Ultimately, I would contend that some of the same economic and discursive contradictions that inspired Russian writers to focus their creative energies on economics also fostered the polyphony of Dostoevsky's later novels. For this reason the present inquiry may be of interest to those with a

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<sup>1</sup> In focusing on the discursive and economic discrepancies shaping this period of Russian literature, I follow a clue Mikhail Bakhtin leaves in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* when he remarks that the "exceptionally acute contradictions of early Russian capitalism" (*iskliuchitel'no rezkie protivorechiia rannego russkogo kapitalizma*) provided the ideal historical conditions for the emergence of the polyphonic novel. M. M. Bakhtin, "Problemy poetika Dostoevskogo," in *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh*, vol. 6 (Moskva: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 1996), 45; M. M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 35.

<sup>2</sup> Seminal texts of the New Economic Criticism include Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); and Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies: After Marx and Freud* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990). For a very useful survey of this sub-field of New Historicism, see Mark Osteen and Martha Woodmansee, "Taking Account of the New Economic Criticism: An Historical Introduction," in *The New Economic Criticism* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Shell, *The Economy of Literature*, 7.

critical stake in Dostoevsky studies, in the transition from Romanticism to Realism, or in the interrelation between literature and economics understood more broadly.

What then were the specific contradictions besetting Russia at the time? In *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, Marshall Berman has highlighted the discrepancies in economic development and cultural forms that had arisen between the Europeanized, incipiently industrializing city of St. Petersburg and the agrarian feudal realities of the Russian Empire, on the one hand, and between the legacy of dynamic modernization bequeathed by Peter the Great (1682-1725) and the stagnation evident under the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855) on the other. This, Berman argues, helped to produce the “warped and weird modernity” of Pushkin’s, Gogol’s, and Dostoevsky’s Petersburg texts.<sup>4</sup> The view that the Russian economy was stagnating during Nicholas I’s reign is easy to support with evidence gleaned in hindsight, but it would have been considerably less obvious to people living in St. Petersburg at the time. In fact, Nicholas I and his ministers had no unified policy of either fostering or hampering industry.<sup>5</sup> Although it was not until after the Crimean War and the Emancipation of the serfs that the industrialization of Russia’s essentially agrarian economy began on a wide scale, by the 1830s the early beginnings of this process were being felt in St. Petersburg, where the economic and moral implications of expanding commerce and industry were frequently debated in periodicals.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the censorship that limited public discussions on pressing social and economic issues—channeling such discussions into literature instead—must have made it difficult for readers to judge in which direction, if any, the Russian economy was actually moving.<sup>7</sup> In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the debate as to whether Russia was or should be industrializing was rife with contradiction.

Still, Russian contemporaries would have certainly noted that the foundations of Russia’s rigidly hierarchical, estate-based social structure were becoming less stable during this period. Although the serf, and not money, had been the main unit of Russian wealth, and official ranks, titles, and honors remained the primary indicators of social success, the expansion of the money economy was gradually making money itself a more important marker of social power and status. Since the eighteenth century, European patterns of prodigal consumption had caused the increasing indebtedness of the landowning gentry.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, we can see a reflection of this process in the very definition of the word *economy* (*ekonomiia*) in the so-called *New Dictionary* (*Novyi slovotol’kovatel’*, 1803-06). This dictionary—ostensibly published to explain words of

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<sup>4</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London and New York: Verso, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> On the ambivalence of Nicholas I and his ministers toward the question of industrial development, see Walter McKenzie Pintner, *Russian Economic Policy Under Nicholas I* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), esp. 29, 91-93, 123.

<sup>6</sup> William L Blackwell, *The Beginnings of Russian Industrialization, 1800-1860* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), esp. 3-4, 403; Pintner, *Russian Economic Policy*, 93.

<sup>7</sup> One example of the contradictory nature of economic policies and the discrepancies between public discourse and material conditions in this period can be seen in the industrial exhibitions the Minister of Finance, E. F. Kankrin (1774-1845), began organizing in St. Petersburg in 1829. Arranging these exhibitions for the sake of publicity, Kankrin did not actually seek to encourage industrial growth with his policies. Blackwell, *Beginnings of Russian Industrialization*, 177.

<sup>8</sup> Iu[rrii] M[ikhailovich] Lotman, “Ocherk dvorianskogo byta,” in Roman A. S. Pushkina “Evgenii Onegin.” *Komentarii*. (Leningrad: Prosveshchenie, 1983), 35-110; Lotman, “Tema kart i kartochnoi igry v russkoi literature v russkoi literature nachala XIX veka,” *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* 7, no. 365 (1975): 120-44; Arcadius Kahan, “The Costs of “Westernization” in Russia: The Gentry and the Economy in the Eighteenth Century,” *Slavic Review* 25, no. 1 (March 1, 1966): 40-66.

foreign origin that had entered the Russian lexicon but were as yet unfamiliar to many Russian readers—offers a normative explication of *economy* designed to instruct Russian landowners on how to balance the cultural values of their social estate with the imperative to retain ownership of their manorial estates:

Экономия, разсуждаемая яко мудрое управление имением, есть из первейших качеств, которое надлежало бы благовременно внушать детям. Она есть одно из главнейших оснований их славы и благоденствия, и состоит в распоряжении своих дел таким образом, чтобы расход соответствовал приходу, и чтобы никакое излишество не имело места. . . . Но, наблюдая правила благоразумной экономии, должно беречься, дабы не впасть в постыдную скупость, порок, заражающий обыкновеннее стариков. Экономия тогда только может почитаться добродетелью, когда она будет занимать среднее место между расточительностию и скупостию.

Economy, understood as the wise direction of an estate, is one of the first qualities one must instill in children in a timely fashion. It is one of the main foundations of their glory and well-being, and it consists in the arrangement of one's affairs in such a way that expenditure corresponds to income, and there is no excess. . . . However, observing the rules of reasonable economy, one must take care not to fall into shameful miserliness, a vice that more often infects old men. Economy can only be considered a virtue when it occupies a middling place between prodigality and miserliness.<sup>9</sup>

The economic ideal set forth here is one of harmonious balance between expenditure and income, and between the character traits of miserliness and prodigality. Notably, this ideal has nothing whatsoever to do with profit: the balance the article advocates amounts to an absence of savings as well as debt. In warning against “shameful” miserliness, and mentioning elsewhere the general noble inclination to prodigality (*motovstvo*), the article highlights the fact that spending rather than saving had become the economic norm for the Russian gentry.

By the mid-nineteenth century, over half of all privately held serfs had been mortgaged to the state to pay off landowners' debts.<sup>10</sup> This meant that many people who nominally owned serfs did not really own them anymore, giving the whole system of serfdom a sense of instability and a tinge of unreality: serfs would be assigned monetary value that was paid out to their former owners in the form of state loans, turning what had been units of material wealth into forms of monetary debt. Furthermore, while rank was theoretically a more important sign of social status in urban centers than money, the penetration of Russian markets by a steadily increasing supply of foreign commodities made it more and more difficult for people to afford the lifestyle necessary for anyone wishing to appear worthy of promotion.<sup>11</sup> Yet even as it increasingly encroached on Russian life, money itself remained a highly unstable sign of value. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Russian government repeatedly increased the money supply in order to finance wars and pay off its own debts. This led to prolonged inflation

<sup>9</sup> “Экономиия,” Nikolai Ianovskii, *Novyi slovotol'kovatel'* (Sanktpeterburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1803).

<sup>10</sup> Pintner, *Russian Economic Policy Under Nicholas I*, 44.

<sup>11</sup> On the inability of low-ranking civil servants (e.g. of the ninth through fourteenth grades on the Table of Ranks) to afford a noble lifestyle, see Boris Nikolaevich Mironov, *Sotsial'naiia istoriia Rossii perioda Imperii (XVIII-Nachalo XX v.): Genezis lichnosti, demokraticheskoi sem'i, grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravovogo gosudarstva* (S.-Peterburg: D. Bulanin, 1999), 1:87.

and rampant counterfeiting, resulting in the complete collapse of the main unit of currency (the paper *assignatsiia*) in the early 1840s.<sup>12</sup> The early nineteenth century was thus characterized by an uncertainty as to which signs had value, and what value to ascribe to them.

No less relevant than the contradictions of Russia's economic life was its contradictory relationship to Western Europe over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The century-long state-sponsored Russian importation of European models of culture, industry and statecraft would collide with the prolonged threat posed to the existing Russian order by the French Revolution, the Napoleonic wars, and the Decembrist uprising of 1825. Although the collapse of the old European order led to intense official suspicion of foreign ideological influence, France in particular continued to exert considerable influence on Russian culture in the 1830s-1840s. Inevitably, the primary conduit of French influence was no longer the Russian state. Russia's writers and intellectuals looked to two distinct (and broadly incompatible) French cultural models for inspiration: the prerevolutionary ideal of good manners that governed the comportment of "polite society," on the one hand, and the bourgeois ideals that had provided the rationale for overthrowing the French *ancien régime* on the other. Since the late eighteenth century, noble Russian writers like Pushkin had been educated to pattern their behavior and even their language after their French counterparts in the old nobility: French norms influenced both their style of writing and the social worlds represented in their works. Over the course of the 1830s, however, the gradual professionalization and incipient democratization of Russian letters, accompanied by the importation of nascent Realist tendencies from Europe, caused a shift of focus to those segments of the population who were unable to approximate the ideals of high society no matter how they tried. From Pushkin's "The Queen of Spades" to Dostoevsky's *The Double*, French literary and cultural models, historically distinct and often ideologically and stylistically contradictory, helped to structure Russian prose narratives of the 1830s-1840s.

The slow professionalization of Russian letters led to the new imperative to write for money, which contrasted sharply with the exalted aesthetic value attributed to literature.<sup>13</sup> The perception that writing was becoming an increasingly commercial enterprise collided with the cardinal presuppositions of the Romantic era, during which the modern European disciplines of

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<sup>12</sup> "Assignatsiia," *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (St. Petersburg: I. A. Efron, 1890).

<sup>13</sup> Classic studies such as T. S. Grits' *Slovesnost' i kommertsii: Knizhnaia lavka A. F. Smirdina* and William Mills Todd III's *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin* detail the transformation of literary institutions in the 1830s, which witnessed a significant growth in readership, the development of a commercially viable press, increasing possibilities for authors to make a living from their writing, and advancements in the printing and distribution of books. Pushkin's, Gogol's, and Dostoevsky's creative responses to these changes have been well documented by André Meynieux, Anne Lounsbury, and Todd, respectively. Together, these accounts demonstrate not only the transformation of literary institutions in the period but also the heated public debates such changes provoked. In *Romantic Encounters: Writers, Readers, and the "Library for Reading,"* Melissa Frazier points out that the presence of these debates is one of only a very few things that can be known for certain about professionalization during this period, as most of the information available about readership and book sales derives from literature itself. Considering the "literary marketplace" as a product of the Romantic imagination, Frazier highlights the conspicuous interconnection of aesthetic and economic theory and practice in this period. See T. S. Grits, *Slovesnost' i kommertsii: Knizhnaia lavka A.F. Smirdina* [1929] (Moscow: Agraf, 2001); William Mills Todd III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1986); André Meynieux, *Pouchkine, homme de lettres, et la littérature professionnelle en Russie* (Paris: Librairie des Cinq continents, 1966); Anne Lounsbury, *Thin Culture, High Art: Gogol, Hawthorne, and Authorship in Nineteenth-Century Russia and America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2007); William Mills Todd III, "Dostoevsky as a Professional Writer," in *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii*, J. Leatherbarrow, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 66-92.

aesthetics and economics were being established in opposition to each other.<sup>14</sup> In Russia, this perception, while supported by some signs of professionalization in the 1830s, was also fostered, and potentially exaggerated, by the importation of aesthetic discourse from Europe, where commercialization was taking place on a far greater scale.<sup>15</sup> Guided by Romantic aesthetic theory, many Russian writers and critics in this period defined art as a product of inspiration rather than labor, whose value could not be approximated by money. Nevertheless, Romanticism's insistence on isolating the aesthetic from economics actually meant that these concepts became inseparable. Registering the inextricability of aesthetic and economic discourses in the period, Russian writers relied extensively on economic metaphors to articulate specifically literary dilemmas. Moreover, I would suggest that the tangible foreignness of contemporary aesthetic and economic discourses made their literariness apparent to Russian writers.

It should be stressed that the Russian literary process was not linear. The typically Karamzinian institution of the literary salon, along with eighteenth-century practices of patronage, continued to operate throughout the professionalizing 1830s. Similarly, even as Realism began to emerge as the leading literary movement, many of the genres, forms, and aesthetic ideals of Neoclassicism, Sentimentalism, and Romanticism remained productive. Thus, just a few decades after Karamzin's language reforms had codified the modern Russian literary language, writers and readers were confronted with a "proliferation of discourses and texts" that made this period in literary history one of profound contradictions.<sup>16</sup> This discursive and institutional heterogeneity seems especially well-suited to Romanticism's "self-conscious play of self and other as native and foreign."<sup>17</sup> Yet as the early Realist insistence on representing the typical features of contemporary society began to impinge on Russian literature, the reliance on foreign narrative models to tell stories about Russia engendered still greater paradoxes.

The first section of this dissertation explores an exemplary case of such a paradox: namely, the Russian importation and transformation of French literary and cultural models of ambition, which, being grounded in the historical realities and master narratives of post-Napoleonic France, seem oddly out of place in tales of post-Decembrist Russia. Here I move beyond the theoretical boundaries of New Economic Criticism, relying on methods culled from the fields of conceptual history and the sociology and history of the emotions. I argue that the peculiar narrative dynamics and emotional tonalities informing Russian representations of ambition in the 1830s-1840s arise from a simultaneous engagement with post-Revolutionary French and post-Decembrist Russian literary and social history. In Chapter 1, I draw on dictionary definitions, historical studies, and literary examples to compare the history of Russian and French ambition words and concepts. I trace mad ambition, the most prevalent form of insanity in Russian classics of the 1830s-1840s, to its origins in French psychiatric discourse on the passional imbalance *monomanie ambitieuse*, and I investigate Russian transformations of that discourse in Faddei Bulgarin's "Three Sheets from a Madhouse" ("Tri listka iz doma

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<sup>14</sup> The purported distinction between economic and aesthetic value and the division of the modern European discourses of aesthetics and economics in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have been subjected to thorough critique in recent decades. See, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Harvard University Press, 1987); Barbara H. Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory*, (Harvard University Press, 1988); and John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (University Of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Frazier, *Romantic Encounters*, 41.

<sup>16</sup> Todd, *Fiction and Society*, 1-2.

<sup>17</sup> Frazier, *Romantic Encounters*, 4.

sumasshedshikh,” 1834) and Gogol’s “The Diary of a Madman” (“Zapiski sumasshedshego,” 1835). In Chapter 2, “Plot and Tone,” I compare the narrative and affective structures of Pushkin’s “The Queen of Spades” and Dostoevsky’s *The Double* to Stendhal’s *The Red and the Black* (1830) and Honoré de Balzac’s *The Wild Ass’s Skin* (1831) and *Lost Illusions* (1837-43). I elucidate this Franco-Russian literary exchange by examining representations of economically derived emotions such as ambition, avarice and embarrassment, the wider narrative continuities and discrepancies between French and Russian ambition plots, and Pushkin’s and Dostoevsky’s conscious reflections on dynamics of cross-cultural exchange.

In the second section, I consider the impact of the simultaneous expansion of the money economy and the collapse of the monetary system on nascent Russian Realism. Chapter 3 situates the origins of what would prove to be Dostoevsky’s lifelong fascination with money in the context of the collapse and reestablishment of monetary standards that was taking place just as Realism was establishing itself as the new aesthetic standard. I suggest that the contradictory promises of value printed on devalued bills inform Dostoevsky’s fantastic challenge to Realist aesthetics. Chapter 4 traces the emergence of the miser type in Russia and compares Pushkin’s “The Covetous Knight” (“Skupoi rytsar’,” 1830), Gogol’s *Dead Souls*, and Dostoevsky’s “Mr. Prokharchin” (“Gospodin Prokharchin,” 1846) to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century miser fables. Examining the ways in which Russian authors of the 1830s-1840s employ this classical type to experiment with new techniques of characterization, and focusing most closely on “Mr. Prokharchin,” I posit a crucial link between young Dostoevsky’s interest in the material history of Russian money, his assessment of early Realist typology, and the development of his dialogism.

Working at the intersection of New Economic Criticism, narratology, affect studies, and the history of concepts, I offer this investigation of a productively contradictory period in Russian literary and economic history as a means to clarify vital aspects of early Russian prose, including the genesis of Dostoevsky’s narrative style.

PART I  
MAD AMBITION

## Chapter 1

## Origins and Diagnoses

Из бесчисленного множества причин способствующих заблуждению ума человеческого, есть одна, сильнее всех других действующая и всех более поразительная: это честолюбие.

Among the countless many causes of the derangement of the human mind, there is one that is stronger and more debilitating than all the others: ambition.

—Anonymous, “The Mad Man of Ambition” (“Sumasshedshii chestoliubets,” 1826)

The most famous madmen in Russian literature of the 1830s-1840s suffer from a common ailment: ambition. In Alexander Pushkin’s “The Queen of Spades” (“Pikovaia dama,” 1834), the hero Hermann is an industrious young officer determined to achieve financial “independence.”<sup>18</sup> The blockage of this ambition leads to Hermann’s mental collapse and incarceration at the Obukhovskaia Hospital. In Nikolai Gogol’s “The Diary of a Madman” (“Zapiski sumasshedshego,” 1835) and Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *The Double* (*Dvoinik*, 1846), the heroes Poprishchin and Goliadkin are petty clerks who desire promotion in the civil service and romantic unions with young ladies of superior social standing.<sup>19</sup> Like Hermann, Poprishchin and Goliadkin not only fail to achieve their ambitions, they are ultimately expelled from society and carted off to insane asylums. Together, Pushkin’s, Gogol’s, and Dostoevsky’s tales present middle-class ambition as an emotion that is both inappropriate and anachronistic in the St. Petersburg of Nicholas I.

“The Queen of Spades,” “The Diary of a Madman” and *The Double* offer Russian responses to the literature about ambition that was imported to Russia from France in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. These Russian works simultaneously incorporate and transform two very different French narrative models of ambition. The first is the French Romantic treatment of overweening ambition as a passionate imbalance that leads to madness. This literary representation of ambition was informed by the writings of early French psychiatrists. As the historian Jan Goldstein has shown in her fascinating study, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century*, these psychiatrists diagnosed “ambitious monomania” (*monomanie ambitieuse*), as the dominant psychological disorder in post-Napoleonic France.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Aleksandr Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1937-59), 8:235; “The Queen of Spades,” in *Alexander Pushkin: Complete Prose Fiction*, trans. Paul Debreczeny (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 218.

<sup>19</sup> N[ikolai] V[asil’evich] Gogol’, “Zapiski sumasshedshego,” *Sobranie sochinenie v semi tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1976-79), 3; F[edor] M[ikhailovich] Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsatii tomakh* (Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo “Nauka,” 1972), 1.

<sup>20</sup> Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2001). My work on Russian mad ambition tales is indebted to Goldstein’s research on the clinical history of French ambition. In my discussions of French clinical discourse on mad ambition I summarize Goldstein’s findings, highlighting the aspects most important for my own study. By bringing those findings to bear on the French and Russian literary representations of that disorder, however, I hope to make an

Transforming the clinical discourse on “ambitious monomania” into literary material, French writers composed tales of mad ambition, which made their way to Russia through the periodical press. For instance, at least two stories of this type that appear to be translations from French were published in Russian periodicals of the 1820s, under the titles “The Mad Man of Ambition” (“Sumasshedshii chestoliubets,” 1826) and “Madhouse at Charenton (Fragment from a Traveler’s Notes)” (“Dom sumasshedshikh v Sharentone [Otryvok iz zapisok odnogo puteshestvennika],” 1829).<sup>21</sup> Faddei Bulgarin makes explicit use of French discourse on mad ambition in his little-known story, “Three Pages from a Madhouse, or The Psychological Healing of an Incurable Disease (The First Extract from the Notes of an Old Doctor)” (“Tri listka iz doma sumasshedshikh, ili Psikhicheskoe itselenie neizlechimoj bolezni [Pervoe izvlechenie iz Zapisok starogo vracha],” 1834).<sup>22</sup> As a work Gogol parodies in “The Diary of a Madman,” which in its turn informs Dostoevsky’s *The Double*, Bulgarin’s “Three Pages” serves as a link between French and Russian representations of mad ambition in the 1830s-1840s.

While the French Romantic treatment of ambition as a form of madness is crucial to my study of Russian ambition narratives, this model was not nearly as productive in French literature as the novelistic plot of bourgeois ambition that emerged in implicit opposition to it. The paradigmatic novels of ambition are *The Red and the Black* (*Le Rouge et le noir*, 1830) by Stendhal (1873-42), and *The Wild Ass’s Skin* (*La Peau de chagrin*, 1831) and *Lost Illusions* (*Illusions perdues*, 1837-43) by Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), all of which present ambition as the new and normal way of the world. In wide circulation among Russian readers in the 1830s-1840s, these and other new works of French literature offered Russian authors a set of models for how one might write about contemporary society even as they testified to the marked differences between French and Russian social conditions.<sup>23</sup>

The French stories of mad ambition found in Russian periodicals and Stendhal’s and Balzac’s novels of bourgeois ambition feature contrasting narrative dynamics, divergent attitudes toward ambition, and differing accounts of its emotional valency. By explicitly labelling ambition a mental infirmity in their titles, the Romantic stories “The Mad Man of Ambition” and “Madhouse at Charenton” begin at a point in time after ambition has already been blocked and has resulted in the dissolution of the ambitious man’s personality. Their narrative interest lies in a sane narrator’s “curious” encounter with and subsequent diagnosis of this exotic passional imbalance. The narrators of these stories distance themselves and their readers from ambition by pathologizing it and foreclosing the possibility of its realization. By contrast, as Peter Brooks

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original contribution to the study of how the Russian cultural understanding of the passions was evolving in the first half of the nineteenth century in dialog with French literature, which itself responded to French historical processes and incorporated clinical discourse inspired by them.

<sup>21</sup> Anon., “Sumasshedshii chestoliubets,” *Moskovskii telegraf*, vol. 12, part 2 (1826), 90-103; Anon., “Dom sumasshedshikh v sharentone (Otryvok iz zapisok odnogo puteshestvennika)” *Babochka*, vol. 34 (1829).

<sup>22</sup> Faddei Bulgarin, “Tri listka iz doma sumasshedshikh, ili Psikhicheskoe itselenie neizlechimoj bolezni,” John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (University Of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> Critical explorations of Balzacian and Stendhalian elements in “The Queen of Spades” include Nikolai Lerner, *Rasskazy o Pushkine* (n.p.: Priboi, 1929), 142-43; Richard Gregg, “Balzac and the Women in ‘The Queen of Spades,’” *Slavic and East European Journal* 10, no. 3 (Autumn, 1966): 179-82; and Paul Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin: A Study of Alexander Pushkin’s Prose Fiction* (1983), 208-09, 229-32, 237-38. On Pushkin’s relationship to contemporary French literature more generally, see B. V. Tomashevskii pivotal study, *Pushkin i Frantsiia* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1960). On Dostoevsky’s relationship to Balzac, see Leonid Grossman, “Bal’zak i Dostoevskii,” *Poetika Dostoevskogo* [1914], Moscow: Gos. akademiia khudozh. nauk, 1925.; Grossman, “Gofman, Bal’zak i Dostoevskii,” *Sofiia* 5 (1914): 87-96; and Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

argues in *Reading for the Plot*, the French ambitious hero's desire for social elevation forms rather than dissolves his personality, propelling the plot forward toward the end. The narrative interest lies precisely in the question of whether the hero's ambitions will be realized, and readers are invited to share in his desire for success.<sup>24</sup>

Gogol's "The Diary of a Madman," Pushkin's "The Queen of Spades," and Dostoevsky's *The Double* blend seemingly incommensurate elements of both of these French literary models of ambition. Retaining the Romantic association of ambition with madness, they also use it as a motor of plot and a generator of narrative desire. What results are profoundly ambivalent accounts of ambition that show it to be neither entirely normal nor clearly pathological—neither a feeling readers can comfortably entertain, nor a psychological disorder from which they can easily distance themselves. Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevsky pique the reader's curiosity as to whether or not ambition will be realized, yet ultimately frustrate readers' attempts to decide for themselves how they are meant to think or feel about ambition. These authors present conflicting, cross-cultural perspectives on the desire for upward social mobility.

In order to sort out these multiple perspectives, I focus in this chapter on the history of Russian and French words and concepts concerning ambition, the emergence of the French discourse on mad ambition in Russia, and Bulgarin's and Gogol's appropriations of that discourse in "Three Pages" and "The Diary of a Madman," respectively. In Chapter 2, I explore the idiosyncratic narrative dynamics and peculiar emotional tonalities that result from Pushkin's and Dostoevsky's work of blending French and Russian literary and cultural models of ambition in "The Queen of Spades," and *The Double*. Together, Chapters 1 and 2 offer a partial history of ambition in early nineteenth-century Russian literature that is designed to further our understanding of "The Diary of a Madman," "The Queen of Spades," and *The Double* by highlighting their authors' conscious participation in the nineteenth-century European tradition of ambition narratives.

More broadly, I argue that Russian tales of mad ambition exemplify a defining feature of Russian prose fiction in the 1830s-1840s: the paradoxically productive use Russian authors made of foreign, especially French, economic plots and paradigms which, in being grounded in the historical conditions and master narratives of post-Revolutionary France, seem oddly out of place in tales of Russia's more rigidly hierarchical society based on estate, administrative rank, and the principle of autocracy. In tracing the literary history of Russian ambition, I also aim to contribute to the current movement in literary scholarship that many have dubbed the "affective turn." This movement has derived a great deal of insight from the work of sociologists and historians regarding the socially and historically conditioned nature of emotions.<sup>25</sup> What makes ambition so fascinating to study from the perspective of the literary history of emotions is that ambition itself made the social and historical conditioning of the emotions apparent to the psychiatrists, political thinkers, and creative writers of this period.<sup>26</sup> The history of Russian ambition thus illustrates the deep connexion between evolving nineteenth-century Russian and European discourses on the emotions, as well as the specific socio-economic structures that shaped the distinct path taken by Russian prose fiction during its most formative decades.

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), especially pp. 39-41.

<sup>25</sup> For a useful summary of recent developments in Russian literary scholarship on the emotions, see Jan Plamper, Introduction to Special Issue "Emotional Turn? Feelings in Russian History and Culture," *The Slavic Review*, 68, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 229-37.

<sup>26</sup> Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, esp. 158.

## Conceptual History of Ambition

Beyond the presence of conflicting literary models of ambition within individual Russian texts, ambition appears anomalous in Russian literature because this concept has never had a stable, legitimate place in Russian culture. This is indicated by the simple fact that in Russian there is no good translation for the French word *ambition* or its English synonym “ambition.” An initial challenge to anyone comparing French and Russian literary representations of ambition is the task of delineating the different meanings of French *ambition* and its nearest Russian equivalents: *chestoliubie* and *ambitsiia*. What makes this challenge so formidable is that these words refer to social and cultural concepts, so their translation is as much a socio-cultural question as a linguistic one. Furthermore, the meanings of these Russian and French terms were changing in the early nineteenth century, and they have evolved still further by today. Indeed, the evolution of the concept of ambition is precisely what is at stake in the literature I explore.

Establishing the precise meaning of *chestoliubie* or *ambitsiia* in Russian ambition narratives is especially difficult because it requires deciding when these words can be understood as translations of French *ambition*, when they are used with uniquely Russian connotations, and when they actually depend on this cross-cultural ambiguity for their significance. The difficulty of determining the meaning of *chestoliubie* or *ambitsiia* points to the rich strangeness of these concepts in the literature that seeks to articulate them. Gogol, Pushkin and Dostoevsky make creative use of the elusive and enigmatic quality of Russian ambition. Accordingly, the task of this chapter and the next is not to pin these concepts down, but rather to follow their maneuvering, not to decide precisely what Russian ambition is, but to observe the ways literature poses this concept as a question.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in Russia as in Europe, ambition was understood as a “passion” (*strast*)—a strong, uncontrollable, and potentially dangerous emotion. While European theorists of the emotions had long focused on avarice as the most pernicious economic passion, the social upheavals of the revolutionary era and Napoleon’s spectacular rise and fall inspired a major wave of ambition in young men, bringing greater attention to the dangers of this seemingly uncontrollable passion.<sup>27</sup> During the first post-revolutionary decades French psychiatrists identified unbridled ambition as a pervasive cause of madness; however, the definitive rise of the middle class in French society eventually normalized ambition as an essential, even celebrated feature of bourgeois society. This historical shift in social attitudes toward ambition in France, the absence of a corresponding shift in Russia, and the contrasts between French and Russian concepts of ambition can be seen by comparing the semantic history of the French word *ambition*, which closely corresponds to the history of English “ambition,” to the history of Russian *ambitsiia* and *chestoliubie*. Such a comparison provides an explanation at once linguistic and cultural for why, even after French literature moved away from the Romantic association of ambition with insanity, Russian literature continued sending its ambitious heroes to the madhouse.

Stemming from the Latin *ambire*—to go round, or to go round canvassing for votes—*ambition* entered the French language in the medieval period. The modern *Treasure of the French language* (*Trésor de la langue française*, 1971-94) dates the earliest recorded instance of

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<sup>27</sup> On the eighteenth-century normalization of the concept of avarice in Europe, see Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Historical Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1997).

*ambition* to 1279. As seen in the Appendix at the end of this chapter, where I have gathered all the definitions of French, English, and Russian ambition words to be considered here, in the first edition of the *Dictionary of the French Academy* (*Dictionnaire de L'Académie française*, 1694) the word is defined as “excessive desire for honor and grandeur” (*desir excessif d'honneur et de grandeur*).<sup>28</sup> Retaining the connotation of excess shown here, by the sixth edition of the *DFA* (1832-35), *ambition* acquires a vertical spatial orientation, as “Immoderate desire for honor, glory, elevation, distinction” (*Désir immodéré d'honneur, de gloire, d'élévation, de distinction*).<sup>29</sup> The dictionary specifies that *ambition* can only have a positive connotation when qualified with appropriate epithets, as in “Noble ambition. Laudable, honest ambition” (*Noble ambition. Ambition louable, honnête*). The primary examples provided have negative connotations, by contrast, depicting *ambition* as uncontrollable and boundless: “Unruly ambition. Inordinate ambition. Ambition without limits. Insatiable ambition” (*Ambition dérégulée. Ambition démesurée. Ambition sans bornes. Ambition insatiable*). While these examples hint at a French cultural understanding of overweening ambition as a pathological disorder, I will reserve that notion of ambition for further consideration later in this chapter in connection with the Russian literary texts it inspired.

Of primary importance here is the evolution of the meaning of *ambition* over the course of the nineteenth century. In the eighth edition of the *DFA* (1932-5), *ambition* appears as “Desire or seeking of honors, glory, elevation, distinction (*Désir ou recherche d'honneurs, de gloire, d'élévation, de distinction*). Cutting the qualifier “immoderate” from the earlier definitions, this entry also calls the bourgeois work ethic to mind by adding the dynamic sense of *ambition* as the active “seeking” of what is desired. The plural form “honors” replaces the courtly value of “honor” with a variety of potential desirables, marking a decisive transition away from the originally feudal concept of *ambition*. The primarily negative associations of the word have fallen away as well. This entry includes examples of its usage with both positive and negative connotations under one heading, without mentioning the issue of evaluative judgment at all.<sup>30</sup> The ninth and most recent edition of the *DFA* (1986-) registers an even more dramatic shift in the word’s meaning. Defining it first and foremost as a “Lively desire to elevate oneself so as to realize all the possibilities of one’s nature” (*Vif désir de s'élever pour réaliser toutes les possibilités de sa nature*), the dictionary presents *ambition* as the most natural of desires, indicating the normalization of the concept of social striving in contemporary France.<sup>31</sup>

The English word “ambition” was borrowed from French in the fourteenth century, and the evolution of its meaning closely parallels that of French *ambition*. Explaining it as “The ardent (in early usage, inordinate) desire to rise to high position, or to attain rank, influence, distinction or other preferment,” the *Oxford English Dictionary* relegates the negative value judgment “inordinate” to a parenthetical past of “early usage.”<sup>32</sup> Like French *ambition*, English

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<sup>28</sup> “Ambition,” *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1st ed., (1694, online edition, <http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=ambition> (accessed May 2, 2011).

<sup>29</sup> Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*.

<sup>30</sup> “Ambition,” *Dictionnaire*, 8th ed. (1932, online edition, [artflx.uchicago.edu](http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=ambition), 2009), <http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=ambition> (accessed November 17, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> “Ambition,” *Dictionnaire*, 9th ed. (1986-, online edition, [atilf.atilf.fr/academie9.htm](http://atilf.atilf.fr/academie9.htm)), <http://atilf.atilf.fr/dendien/scripts/generic/cherche.exe?15;s=1854999795;> (accessed November 17, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> “Ambition,” *Oxford English Dictionary* (2009, online edition) [http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50006948?query\\_type=word&query\\_word=ambition&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10&sort\\_type=alpha&result\\_place=1&search\\_id=fBjl-zS0iBd-2265&hilite=50006948](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50006948?query_type=word&query_word=ambition&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=fBjl-zS0iBd-2265&hilite=50006948) (accessed November 17, 2009).

“ambition” can be used in positive, negative, or neutral evaluative statements today, and the positive concept of ambition as a desire to reach one’s natural potential is especially common. Moreover, “ambition” and *ambition* no longer only signify a desire to rise in society. In French, *ambition* can be any “keen aspiration” or “profound desire” (*vive aspiration; désir profond*).<sup>33</sup> In English, it can be “A strong or ardent desire of anything considered advantageous, honouring, or creditable.”<sup>34</sup> Leaving aside its broader meaning of a strong desire for anything at all, I use the word “ambition” in the narrower sense of a desire for social elevation through the acquisition of wealth, a prestigious career, official honors or rewards, or other markers of social recognition and favor. This is the form of ambition at issue in the present chapter and the next.

The precise meanings and the semantic history of the Russian words for ambition—namely, *chestoliubie* and *ambitsiia*—are significantly different than that of French *ambition* and English “ambition.” In fact, both of these Russian words have connotations that are at odds with the bourgeois notion of a legitimate desire for social elevation. This can be seen in occurrences of these words in literature as well as in dictionary definitions of them. For instance, in Alexander Radishchev’s incendiary sentimentalist travelogue, *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow (Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu, 1790)*, the narrator at one point witnesses a father urging his sons to resist the cultural norm of currying favor with those of higher rank in order to advance in society:

Посещать в праздничные дни по утрам знатных особ—обычай скаредный, ничего не значащий, показующий в посетителях дух робости, а в посещаемом дух надменности и слабый рассудок. У римлян было похожее сему обыкновение, которое они называли амбицио, то есть снискание или обхождение; а оттуда и любочестие названо амбицио, ибо посещениями именитых людей юноши снискивали себе путь к чинам и достоинствам.

Once you have entered the world, you will soon learn that in society it is the custom to call upon distinguished personages on holiday mornings: a miserable, senseless custom which betrays a spirit of timidity in the caller, a spirit of conceit and a weak intellect in the personage visited. The Romans had a similar custom, which they called *ambitio*, that is, ‘seeking,’ or ‘going around’; and from this the seeking of honors came to be called *ambitsio*, because, in calling on great personages, ambitious young men sought for themselves a road to honors and preferment.<sup>35</sup>

What makes this passage of particular interest for the present discussion of the meaning of Russian ambition words is that it shows Radishchev comparing Russian and western (in this case, Latin) words for social striving. Referencing *ambitsio* and *liubochestie*, Radishchev uses older forms of the two Russian words used to represent ambition in the nineteenth century: *ambitsiia* and *chestoliubie*.

While the word *liubochestie* (a Slavic calque from the Greek *φιλοτιμια*, or literally, love of honor) continued to be used in the nineteenth century in Russian Orthodox religious contexts, in which it referred to a sinful passion, by the early nineteenth century, *chestoliubie* was standard

<sup>33</sup> “Ambition,” *Dictionnaire*, 9th ed.

<sup>34</sup> “Ambition,” *OED*.

<sup>35</sup> Aleksandr Radishchev, *Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1992), 54; A. N. Radishchev, *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, trans. Leo Wiener (Harvard UP, 1958), 121.

usage in secular contexts.<sup>36</sup> The definition of *liubochestie* in the new *Dictionary of the Russian Language in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (Slovar' russkogo iazyka XVIII-ogo veka)*, is “*chestoliubie*, desire for glory, honors” (*zhelanie slavy, pochestei*). As seen in the epigraph to this chapter, the Russian text of the French story “The Mad Man of Ambition” (“Sumasshedshii chestoliubets”) uses the word *chestoliubie* to translate *ambition*, and *chestoliubie* and related words also appear in Bulgarin’s, Gogol’s and Pushkin’s mad ambition tales. Dostoevsky, by contrast, uses the foreign borrowing *ambitsiia* in *The Double*. Although according to Vasmer’s *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language (Etimologicheskii slovar' Russkogo iazyka)*, *ambitsiia* entered the Russian lexicon at the turn of the eighteenth century—fittingly, it would seem, during the ambitious times of Peter the Great—Radishchev’s spelling of *ambitsio*, with an *-o-* on the end, rather than the now current *-ia-*, is clearly a transliteration from the Latin: this suggests that the form of the word was not yet fixed in Russian at the end of the eighteenth century. In nineteenth-century dictionaries and literary texts, *ambitsiia* is spelled as it is today.

Radishchev’s explication of *ambitsio* as *liubochestie* shows that he expected the latter, a native Slavic word, to be more familiar to his readers, and also that he considered these terms at least roughly equivalent. While his depiction of *liubochestie* as a youthful pursuit of social elevation supports this posited equivalence, by attributing *liubochestie* to people of weak character who value that which is essentially insignificant, Radishchev demonstrates the negative connotations the word *chestoliubie* has retained up to the present day and which therefore distinguish it from *ambition*. The negative valuation of this word in the early nineteenth century, which can be understood at least partly as a legacy of the Russian Orthodox concept of *liubochestie* as a sinful passion, is evident from the definition of *chestoliubie* in the second edition of the *Dictionary of the Russian Academy (Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi, 1806-22)*: “A weakness of spirit leading a person to seek in external means and signs the respect and consideration from others that he does not have for himself” (*Slabost' dukha, po kotoroi chelovek ishchet v naruzhnykh znakakh i sposobakh poluchit' uvazhenie i pochtenie ot drugikh, koikh sam v sebe ne imeet*).<sup>37</sup> As seen here, one of the distinguishing features of Russian *chestoliubie* and French *ambition* is that the Russian word is uniquely implicated in the semiotic problem of false appearances. *Chestoliubie* involves the pursuit of “external signs” (*naruzhnye znaki*) of recognition that misrepresent internal worth.

Vladimir Dal’s mid-nineteenth century dictionary (1863-66) confirms the orientation of *chestoliubie* to appearances and superficial markers of favor, explaining it as the “pursuit of outward respect, esteem, honors” (*iskatel'stvo vneshnei chesti, uvazhen'ia, pocheta, pochestei*).<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Dal describes a *chestoliubets* as someone “passionate about ranks, distinctions, glory, praise and therefore acting not by moral conviction but by the appearance of it” (*strastnyi k chinam, otlichiiam, ko slave, pokhvalam i potomu deistvuiushchii ne po npravstvennym ubezhdeniiam, a po sim vidam*).<sup>39</sup> According to Dal, a *chestoliubets* (a man with *chestoliubie*) is a passionate, immoral dissembler. By contrast, the definition of *ambition* in the *DFA* (1832-5) as “Immoderate desire for honor, glory, elevation, distinction” casts the excess of desire, rather than the superficiality or immorality of what is desired or the means used to obtain it, as problematic.

<sup>36</sup> I am grateful to Viktor Markovich Zhivov for explaining this distinction between the religious and secular usages of *liubochestie* and *chestoliubie*, respectively.

<sup>37</sup> “*Chestoliubie*,” *Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi po azbuchnomu poriadku razpolozhennyi* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1806-22).

<sup>38</sup> “*Chestoliubie*,” *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikoruskogo iazyka Vladimira Dalia* (St. Petersburg, Izd. T-va M. O. Vol'f, 1903-09).

<sup>39</sup> “*Chestoliubets*,” *Tolkovyi slovar'*.

While the *ambitieux* (ambitious man) excessively desires an object that in itself might be perfectly legitimate, the *chestoliubets* displays an immoral desire for, and willingness to manipulate, signs that misrepresent true value.

Defining a *chestoliubets* as someone who is “passionate about ranks,” Dal also points to the close association of *chestoliubie* with the system of official, state-sanctioned signs of social value introduced by Peter I. Peter’s Table of Ranks established a stratified hierarchy of noble civil servants with corresponding ranks in the civilian administration, the military, and at court. While this system theoretically afforded men of low birth the possibility to achieve nobility through zealous service to the state, in practice it also created a series of barriers between men of various ranks, barriers most easily overcome through social connections rather than merit. The legally enshrined administrative designations set forth in the Table of Ranks, an all-pervasive feature of early nineteenth-century Russian society, explains why the state apparatus is more implicated in Russian literary representations of *chestoliubie* than in French representations of *ambition*. Whereas Stendhal’s and Balzac’s ambitious heroes seek success in non-governmental spheres such as the priesthood (in *The Red and the Black*), the literary profession (in *Lost Illusions*), the salons (in *The Wild Ass’s Skin*), or through alliances with influential women (in all three novels), the heroes of Bulgarin’s “Three Pages from a Madhouse,” Gogol’s “The Diary of a Madman,” and Dostoevsky’s *The Double* all desire promotion in the government service. In “The Queen of Spades,” too, the hero is an officer, and therefore in service to the state.

The understanding of ambition as the passionate pursuit of rank inflects literary representations of *chestoliubie* with a particularly complex ideological valence. On one hand, the rigidly hierarchical character of Russian society made the desire for social elevation a threat to social stability. On the other hand, the operations of the government actually depended to a large extent on people’s striving for promotion, which motivated service in the military and civilian bureaucracy. Whereas eager service could be praised as patriotic effort, it could also be viewed as self-serving. As we shall see in the case of Bulgarin’s “Three Pages from the Madhouse,” the words *chestoliubie* and *chestoliubets*, when used to describe persons of lower rank, could serve the reactionary purpose of casting a negative moral light on the desires of the lower orders for social elevation. As Gogol’s “The Diary of a Madman” will show, however, when used by persons of lower rank to describe social superiors, the same terms could issue a seditious challenge to a hierarchy ostensibly founded on merit and patriotic feeling. Thus, an accusation of *chestoliubie* could be made to support or undermine the legitimacy of social stratification.

Further distinguishing *chestoliubie* from French *ambition* is an additional meaning it has that does not appear in early nineteenth-century Russian dictionaries, but which is accounted for in the *Dictionary of Pushkin’s Language* (*Slovar’ iazyka Pushkina*, 1961): “A feeling of self-worth, pride” (*Chuvstvo sobstvennogo dostoinstva, samoliubie*).<sup>40</sup> This is what Pushkin presumably has in mind in “The Queen of Spades” when he describes Hermann as “*chestoliubiv*”:

Будучи твердо убежден в необходимости упрочить свою независимость, Германн не касался и процентов, жил одним жалованьем, не позволял себе малейшей прихоти. Впрочем, он был скрытен и честолюбив, и товарищи его редко имели случай посмеяться над его излишней бережливостью.

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<sup>40</sup> “Chestoliubie,” *Slovar’ iazyka Pushkina* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo inostrannykh i natsional’nykh slovarei, 1961).

Firmly resolved to ensure his independence, Hermann did not touch even the interest earned by these funds; he lived on his salary alone, denying himself even the slightest extravagance. Since he was also reserved and proud, his comrades rarely had occasion to laugh at his excessive thriftiness.<sup>41</sup>

As seen here in Paul Debreczeny's translation of *chestoliubiv* as "proud," this adjective pertains to Hermann's pride rather than his ambitious desire for "independence." Indeed, Hermann's *chestoliubie* is directly opposed to his diligent work and saving; the sense of the sentence in which *chestoliubiv* appears is that although Hermann is frugal, his pride leads him to hide that frugality so that his friends—noble gamblers for whom prodigal spending was a cultural norm—will not disdain him for it.<sup>42</sup> Thus, *chestoliubie* connotes a form of pride that is distinct from the bourgeois ideals of saving money and striving for social elevation, and so when characters with *chestoliubie* pursue an ambition to rise up, they can find themselves in the untenable position of trying to maintain a sense of pride while doing something that is stigmatized by society.

While *chestoliubie* and related forms were the words most commonly used to refer to desire for social elevation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the highlighting of *ambitsio* in Radishchev's *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* and the inclusion of *ambitsiia* in the *New Dictionary (Novyi slovotolkovatel', 1803-06)* testify to the growing importance in Russia of this European quasi-synonym. In Russian literature of the second quarter of the nineteenth century, *ambitsiia* and related words (*ambitsionnyi, ambitsioznyi, ambitsioznost'*) occur with increasing frequency. Curiously, Pushkin never uses these words in his literary works. The *Dictionary of Pushkin's Language (Slovar' iazyka Pushkina)* lists just one instance of *ambitsiia* in all his writings, from a personal letter I cite below. Gogol uses such words only once—in his 1842 novel *Dead Souls (Mertvye dushi)*.<sup>43</sup> Among the major Russian authors, Dostoevsky is the first to have considered *ambitsiia* a subject worth writing about in detail: *ambitsiia* and related words appear eight times in his first novel, *Poor Folk (Bednye liudi, 1846)* and fifteen times in his second, *The Double*. Indeed, the Russian literary scholar Iurii Mann argues that Dostoevsky's focus on *ambitsiia* is what most distinguishes his early works from previous writings of the Natural School.<sup>44</sup> But what exactly is *ambitsiia*?

As an early eighteenth-century borrowing, *ambitsiia* appeared in Russian several centuries after *ambition* emerged in the French and English lexicons. According to Vasmer's *Etymological Dictionary*, *ambitsiia* came to Russian via the Polish *ambicja*, but other major dictionaries—such as that of Dal and *The Great Academic Dictionary of the Russian Language (Bol'shoi akademicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka)*—state that it is a borrowing from French. In any case, one thing is clear: like so many other words, concepts, and cultural values that came from the west in the eighteenth century, *ambitsiia* was a foreign import that took on a unique significance in Russia. A key difference between Russian *ambitsiia* and French *ambition* is that,

<sup>41</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 235; "Queen of Spades," 218.

<sup>42</sup> Iurii Lotman discusses noble prodigality in "Ocherk Dvorianskogo byta," 36-42; Andrew Wachtel explores the conflict between Hermann's attempt to amass a fortune and the cultural values of the elite Russian society in his article, "Rereading 'The Queen of Spades,'" *Pushkin Review*, vol. 3 (2000): 13-21.

<sup>43</sup> In *Dead Souls*, the protagonist Chichikov tells the landowner Nozdrev that he is purchasing dead souls in order to impress his future in-laws, whom he calls "most ambitious people" (*preambitsionnye liudi*)." Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 1997), 77; N. V. Gogol', *Mertvye dushi*, SS, 5:76.

<sup>44</sup> Iurii Mann, "Filosofiia i poetika 'natural'noi shkoly'," *Problemy tipologii russkogo realizma* (Moscow: Izd. "Nauka," 1969), 299-304.

like *chestoliubie*, *ambitsiia* refers to a person's values and feelings about him or herself as well as to desire for social elevation. For instance, the *New Dictionary* defines *ambitsiia* as "Love of glory, haughtiness, love of honor, extreme and inordinate desire for wealth, titles, honor" (*Slavoliubie, vysokomerie, liubochestie, chrezvychnoe i nepomernoie zhelanie k bogatsvu, k dostoinstvu, k chesti*).<sup>45</sup> Etymologically, *slavoliubie* and *liubochestie* point to what one "loves," rather than to what one "desires." *Ambitsiia* as *vysokomerie* (haughtiness, arrogance) is especially distinct from French *ambition*, as *vysokomerie* is a matter of self-esteem: it is about valuing oneself too highly, rather than wanting more of what society deems valuable. Thus, the meaning of *ambitsiia* closest to that of French *ambition*, "extreme and immoderate desire for wealth, titles, honor," is coupled with the idea of inappropriately self-aggrandizing aspirations.

Dal reinforces the idea that *ambitsiia* is as much a matter of how one feels about oneself as it is about what one desires, defining *ambitsiia* as: "a feeling of honor, nobility; pride, arrogance, conceit; demand for external signs of respect, esteem" (*chuvstvo chesti, blagorodstva; samoliubie, spes', chvanstvo; trebovanie vneshnikh znakov uvazheniia, pocheta*).<sup>46</sup> Here, *ambitsiia* is first of all a "feeling" of honor or nobility, rather than a "desire" for them. Similarly, "pride," "arrogance" and "conceit" are all feelings about oneself, and they precede the more desirous meaning of "demand for external signs of respect, esteem." From each of the above dictionary definitions, it is clear that while in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, *ambitsiia* could refer to a desire for social elevation, making it appear synonymous with English "ambition" or French *ambition*, it also had an alternative, uniquely Russian meaning that is summed up in the *Dictionary of the Russian Language in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (*Slovar' russkogo iazyka XVIII-ogo veka*) as a "feeling of personal worth" (*chuvstvo sobstvennogo dostoinstva*). Depending on the perspective of the person ascribing *ambitsiia* to him or herself or to someone else, this feeling of self-worth might be viewed as either "haughtiness" (*vysokomerie*) or a feeling of pride proper to a nobleman (*chuvstvo chesti, blagorodstva*).

While most definitions of *ambitsiia* in the *Novyi slovotolkovatel'* and *Dal'* have a sharply negative moral connotation, a "feeling of honor or nobility" does not. For a nobleman, a "feeling of nobility" would not be a fault. This is the meaning Pushkin evidently has in mind in his only recorded usage of *ambitsiia*. In an 1825 letter to his friend Prince Viazemsky, Pushkin unapologetically—even proudly—says he has *ambitsiia*. He writes that he is willing to contribute poems to the journal *The Moscow Telegraph* (*Moskovskii telegraf*, 1825-1834), but that his *ambitsiia* makes him refuse to be named among its editors:

Если ему нужны стихи мои, то пошли ему, что тебе попадетя (кроме «Онегина»), если же мое имя, как сотрудника, то не соглашусь из благородной гордости, т. е. амбиции: «Телеграф» человек порядочный и честный — но враль и невежда; а вранье и невежество журнала делится между его издателями; в часть эту входить не намерен.

If he needs my verses, then send him whatever you like (other than *Onegin*), if he needs my name as a collaborator, then I won't agree out of noble pride, i.e. *ambitsiia*: *The Telegraph* is an orderly and honest man—but a liar and an ignoramus; and the lies and

<sup>45</sup> "Ambitsiia," *Novyi slovotolkovatel'*.

<sup>46</sup> "Ambitsiia," *Tolkovyi slovar'*.

ignorance of the journal are shared among its publishers; I do not intend to go into that group.<sup>47</sup>

Like Radishchev's handling of *ambitsio* in *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, Pushkin's usage of *ambitsiia* is somewhat tentative. Whereas Radishchev provides a historical commentary on the origin of *ambitsio* and explains that this word is synonymous with *liubochestie*, Pushkin prefaces *ambitsiia* with the definition "noble pride." This may indicate that Pushkin is considering but is not entirely confident about the equivalency of the concepts of "noble pride" and *ambitsiia*; that *ambitsiia* comes to his mind only after a moment's pause, as unusual or foreign words tend to do; or else that he does not trust Viazemsky would understand his meaning if he simply used *ambitsiia* without explaining it. Interestingly, Faddei Bulgarin makes a very similar statement in his *Memoirs (Vospominaniia, 1846-49)*, referring at one point to his "innate noble pride (that which we call *ambitsiia*)" (*vrozhdennaia blagorodnaia gordost' [to, chto my nazываем ambitsiei]*).<sup>48</sup> In the writings of Radishchev, Pushkin, and Bulgarin, *ambitsiia* stands out as a concept Russian writers seem eager to invoke but feel the need to qualify.

Explaining *ambitsiia* as his "noble pride," Pushkin—a member of the gentry—links *ambitsiia* to his inherited social status. As a feeling of pride that prompts him to avoid being associated with the "lies and ignorance"—and presumably also the commercial interests—of the editors of *The Moscow Telegraph*, Pushkin's *ambitsiia* is not aimed at a progressive change in class position (e.g. a member of the lower class rising up), but rather at a conservative preservation of noble distinction and privilege. Although in the 1820s Pushkin published his own works in *The Moscow Telegraph*, by the end of that decade he had distanced himself from the journal and its editor, Nikolai Polevoi (1796-1846), a self-made man who came to be viewed by members of Pushkin's elite circle as representative of the commercialization of Russian letters. For his part, Polevoi criticized these noble writers by calling them "literary aristocrats."<sup>49</sup> Showing Pushkin's wish to disassociate himself from men like Polevoi, his letter to Viazemsky also reveals that Russian *ambitsiia* is not so much a matter of material wealth or markers of status, but is instead closely bound up in social reputation. Motivating him to protect his existing reputation and maintain the status quo, Pushkin's *ambitsiia* is a defensive form of desire opposed to the market forces of commercialization and democratization.

Pushkin's letter helps us to understand Dostoevsky's usage of *ambitsiia* in his epistolary novel *Poor Folk*. In sharp contrast to *ambition* in Stendhal's and Balzac's novels, *ambitsiia* in *Poor Folk* pertains to the hero's fall, rather than attempted rise, in society. Dostoevsky's protagonist Devushkin is not a young social climber but a middle-aged nobleman whose position in society worsens throughout the novel. Over thirty years of work in the civil service Devushkin has reached the rank of titular councilor and thereby attained noble status, but this rise has already taken place before the start of the novel.<sup>50</sup> Devushkin's first letter begins the process of

<sup>47</sup> A. S. Pushkin, P. A. Viazemskomu, July, 1825, *PSS*, 13:185.

<sup>48</sup> Faddei Bulgarin, "Tri listka iz doma sumashedshikh," *Severnaia pchela*, February 15, 1834, 37-38 edition. I am grateful to Luba Golburt for pointing out this echo of Pushkin's formulation in Bulgarin's *Memoirs*.

<sup>49</sup> See Chester M. Rzakiewicz, "N. A. Polevoi's *Moscow Telegraph* and the Journal Wars of 1825-1834," in Deborah Martinsen, *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 64-90; Nelli Alekseevna Popkova, "Odin iz zamechatel'neishikh deiatelei russkoi literatury," *Moskovskii telegraf, izdavaemyi Nikolai [verify that it is Nikolai and not Nikolaem] Polevym. Ukazatel' soderzhaniia*, (Saratov: Zonal'naiia nauchnaia biblioteka Saratovskogo universiteta, 1990), 1:3-17.

<sup>50</sup> In one of his first letters to Varenka, Devushkin explains that he was not born a nobleman. F. M. Dostoevskii, *Bednye liudi*, *PSS*, 1:120.

his decline in social and economic position, telling of his relocation to worse living quarters than he had previously enjoyed. By the end of the novel he is even poorer than before and utterly isolated from society. Rather than a force of desire that spurs him to elevate himself, Devushkin's *ambitsiia* is a feeling of self-worth he is in danger of losing when he falls into poverty and disgrace.

In his article "Philosophy and Poetics of the Natural School" ("Filosofii i poetika natural'noi shkoly") Mann links Devushkin's *ambitsiia* to the latter's "pride" (*samoliubie*), rightly softening the negative moral connotation such pride would normally have in Russian by describing it as Devushkin's basic "awareness and affirmation of his own "human 'dignity'" (*osoznanie i utverzhdenie svoego chelovecheskogo 'dostoinstva'*).<sup>51</sup> When placed in the context of the conceptual history of Russian ambition I am pursuing here, Mann's account of *ambitsiia* in *Poor Folk* helps us to appreciate the evolution—more specifically, the decline—of the notion of *ambitsiia* as noble pride that was taking place between the dates of Pushkin's friendly letter to Viazemsky and Dostoevsky's novel in letters. That Devushkin's *ambitsiia* is a feeling of pride or self-worth can be seen when he writes to his correspondent, Varenka, that he told his colleagues he accepted charity from his superior at the office: "I stuffed my shame in my pocket: I hid it. What kind of shame should I have, what kind of pride (*ambitsiia*) in such a circumstance!" (*Ia styd-to v karman: priatal. Kakoi tut styd, chto za ambitsiia takaia pri takom obstoiatel'stve!*).<sup>52</sup> As a feeling of pride, Devushkin's *ambitsiia* is bound up with his social position and reputation. For instance, when Varenka reproaches Devushkin for confronting an officer in a drunken state, he assures her that his *ambitsiia* has not been compromised because none of his superiors know about the incident:

[В]ы беспокоитесь об том, что обо мне подумают, на что спешу объявить вам, Варвара Алексеевна, что амбиция моя мне дороже всего. Вследствие чего и донося вам об несчастиях моих и всех этих беспорядках, уведомляю вас, что из начальства еще никто ничего не знает, да и не будет знать, так что они все будут питать ко мне уважение по-прежнему.

[Y]ou are worrying yourself about what others will think of me; about which I hasten to notify you, Varvara Alekseevna, that my pride (*ambitsiia*) is dearer to me than anything. Consequently, in reporting to you about my misfortunes and all these disturbances, I inform you that the supervisors still know nothing about it, nor will they, so they will all have respect for me as before.<sup>53</sup>

Devushkin's *ambitsiia* is not a desire for social elevation but a feeling he has about himself as determined by the views of others and the official classifications of the state.

Without noting the associative ties between *ambitsiia* and nobility in the nineteenth century, Mann does point out the interesting paradox that while Dostoevsky's presentation of Devushkin as a man with *ambitsiia* is part of what makes the author's treatment of the poor democratic, Devushkin's *ambitsiia* is actually a sign of his own conservatism, as the character "relies on the official categories of the law and the state for his idea of himself" (*opiraetsia na*

<sup>51</sup> Mann, "Filosofii," 299.

<sup>52</sup> Dostoevskii, *Bednye liudi*, 95.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

*ofitsial'nye pravovye i gosudarstvennye kategorii*).<sup>54</sup> For Devushkin as for Pushkin, *ambitsiia* is a feeling of endangered self-worth that invokes and upholds rigid social divisions. Whereas Pushkin inherited his *ambitsiia* as part of his old nobility pedigree, Devushkin earns his by achieving noble status through service to the state.<sup>55</sup> Pushkin's letter shows the poet striving to support himself financially as a writer but hoping to safeguard his noble pride and reputation, and Devushkin's letters show him striving—and failing—to support himself as a civil servant, losing his *ambitsiia* as a result of his poverty.<sup>56</sup> The very possession of *ambitsiia* by an indigent, ill-educated character like Devushkin testifies to the changing composition of the nobility in this period as lower-class men managed to work their way into it and poor men gave it a new face.

By the twentieth century, the meaning of *ambitsiia* as “noble pride” and its meaning of a desire for social elevation were overtaken by the idea of “haughtiness” or “arrogance.” Unlike French and English ambition words, during this time *ambitsiia* had a sharply negative connotation. The most recent edition of the *Great Academic Dictionary of the Russian Language* (2004-) explains it in terms of excessive pride and pretensions to greatness:

1. Гордость, обостренное чувство собственного достоинства.
2. Чрезмерное самомнение, самолюбие; спесь, чванство. Притязания на что-л., вызванные уверенностью в себе, в своих силах, возможностях; честолюбивые замыслы.

1. Pride, heightened sense of self-worth.
2. Inordinately high opinion of one's self; arrogance, conceit. Pretensions to something, stimulated by confidence in oneself, one's powers, possibilities; ambitious ideas.<sup>57</sup>

The examples the *GAD* provides of *ambitsiia* are especially suggestive in that they are mostly taken from the writings of nineteenth-century authors whom I consider to have meant something else by *ambitsiia* than the meanings the *GAD* ascribes to it. For instance, the first example the dictionary gives for the meaning “pride, heightened sense of self-worth” is the very same letter I have cited above in which Pushkin explains his *ambitsiia* as “noble pride.” By removing the connotation of nobility from its definition of *ambitsiia*, the dictionary obscures the social basis of Pushkin's declaration of self-worth. It is also striking that while in nineteenth-century dictionaries, entries for *ambitsiia* typically reference desire or striving for some kind of social elevation, even if they relegate that desire to the status of a secondary or tertiary definition, here, by contrast, *ambitsiia* pertains solely to an overvaluation of the self in the context within it finds itself. In other words, this twentieth-century concept of *ambitsiia* has to do with someone who

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<sup>54</sup> Mann, “Filosofia,” 301.

<sup>55</sup> Like Mann, I hold that Devushkin's *ambitsiia* is very much bound up in social and political hierarchies, unlike Elena Drzhakova, who considers it as a broadly, ahistorically human feeling of self-consciousness. I do agree, however, with Derzhakova's view that Dostoevsky presents Devushkin's *ambitsiia* as a “normal” feeling that is “worthy of sympathy.” See “Madness and Defense of Personality in *The Double*,” in “Ambition,” in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 6th ed., 1835, <http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=ambition>.

<sup>56</sup> Pushkin's complex negotiation of the emerging Russian literary marketplace has been examined in depth by Andre Meynieux, William Mills Todd III, Andrew Kahn. See Meynieux, *Pouchkine, homme de lettres*; Todd, “Institutions of Literature,” in *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin*, 45-105; Kahn, “Genius and the Commerce of Poetry,” *Pushkin's Lyric Intelligence* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 158-216.

<sup>57</sup> “Ambitsiia,” *Bol'shoi akademicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka* (Moscow: Nauka, 2004).

thinks too highly of him or herself now, rather than with someone who wants to better him or herself in time.

Although the bourgeois meaning of *ambitsiia* as a desire for upward social mobility does not appear to have been operative during the Soviet period—when such a desire was clearly taboo—there are signs that it may be reemerging in Russia today. A 2006 article in the journal *The Banner (Znamia)* registers this change:

В последнее время многим бросается в глаза, как изменились слова амбиции и амбициозный. Яркая примета нашего времени – словоупотребления типа: кадровый центр «Амбиция» (он занимается трудоустройством), 11-я ежегодная конференция "Управление в России: время амбициозных целей". А вот из объявления о вакансиях: «Нужен еще один амбициозный и целеустремленный сотрудник».<sup>58</sup>

Recently many people have been struck by how the words *ambitsii* (ambitions) and *ambitsiozni* (ambitious) are changing. The following usages are a clear sign of our times: skill center “*Ambitsiia*” (an employment agency), 11<sup>th</sup> conference “Administration in Russia: a time of ambitious goals.” And here from a job listing: “We need yet another ambitious and purposeful coworker.”

Noting the sharply negative connotations of *ambitsiia* during the Soviet period, the article ascribes the changing meaning of the word to the evolving makeup of post-Soviet society: “A generation of successful and ambitious young people has appeared, who are answering life’s calls—they are pursuing careers” (*Poiavilos’ pokolenie uspekhnykh i ambitsioznykh molodykh liudei, kotorye otvechaiut na vyzovy zhizni—delaiut kar’eru*).<sup>59</sup> Associating ambition with young people’s efforts to pursue a “career,” this article suggests that in the context of post-Soviet capitalism, Russian *ambitsiia* is evolving back in the direction of its English and French counterparts.

The contemporary evolution of *ambitsiia* provides a lively example of how the desire for social elevation, and the related notions of pride, self-worth, and individual self-realization, have been in a state of perpetual, ideologically charged fluctuation throughout modern Russian history. This is precisely why the semantic history of *chestoliubie* and *ambitsiia* is an indispensable preface to my analysis of Russian ambition narratives in the remainder of this chapter and the next. As we have seen, with the exception of the sense of *ambitsiia* as “noble pride,” in the nineteenth century these words connoted desires and feelings considered inappropriate, signifying a form of pride that was not easy to maintain in the face of the commercial or professional strategies necessary to achieve social elevation. Even when used to mean “noble pride,” *ambitsiia* referred to a feeling that was out of place in the nineteenth century insofar as it was threatened by historical forces defining the age, such as the gradual impoverishment of the nobility and the erosion of its position of social privilege. And yet, despite the absence of a non-pejorative word for the desire for upward social mobility—or, indeed, precisely because of the alluring creative challenge this absence posed—the mad ambition tales of Gogol, Pushkin, and Dostoevsky dissect this desire without condemning it.

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<sup>58</sup> Irina Levontina, “Shum slovaria,” *Znamia: Ezhemesiachnyi literaturno-khudozhestvennyi i obshchestvenno-politicheskii zhurnal* 8 (2006), <http://magazines.russ.ru/znamia/2006/8/le12.html> (accessed December 6, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

The complexity of Russian ambition words and the ambivalent narratives they help to structure are indicative of the conflicting limits placed upon ambition, as well as its increasing pertinence, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Russia had no strong middle class to legitimate or celebrate the rise of ambition on a nationwide scale. In sharp contrast to the successive transformations of French legal and social institutions from 1789 to 1830, which were facilitated in no small way by increasing social mobility, Russia witnessed the state repression of French-inspired liberalism. Catherine II reacted against the radicalization of French Enlightenment ideals, Alexander I grew increasingly conservative over the course of his reign, and Nicholas I harshly suppressed the Decembrist uprising in 1825, and instituted increasing repression in the wake of the 1830 July Revolution in France. In 1830s-1840s Petersburg, then, bourgeois ambition—like so many other cultural values and social norms emerging in post-Revolutionary France and capturing the imagination of Russian readers—was truly out of order.

Intent on preserving autocracy and serfdom, and increasingly suspicious of liberal and democratic social movements after the Decembrist uprising and the July Revolution, Nicholas I's regime took steps to solidify the rigid divisions on which Russian society rested and to minimize upward social mobility. For instance, the new Digest of Laws, which was codified in 1832 and went into effect in 1835, reinforced the estate-based (rather than class-based) structure of Russian society more firmly than did any other codex in Russian history.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, in the 1840s the government raised the requirements for entry to both the personal (i.e. non-hereditary) and the hereditary nobility for the first time since Peter the Great established the Table of Ranks.<sup>61</sup> Although these legal strictures were fundamentally hostile to ambition, several historians have nevertheless suggested that the military and civil service did provide significant numbers of men of lower-class origin the means for upward social mobility in the 1830s-1840s.<sup>62</sup> According to the social historian Boris Mironov, the government was unable to curtail the number of people who attained nobility because increasing numbers entered secondary schools, the officer corps, and the civil service, each of which was a potential route to nobility.<sup>63</sup> Clearly this period saw a rising contradiction between the real possibility of upward mobility and the government's attempts to hinder social advancement.

Alongside the social contradiction between societal agents and the state we find a properly literary contradiction, acutely felt by Russian writers, between the representations of social mobility in French literature and the relative rigidity of Russian social structures. If the influx of entrepreneurial attitudes into Russia is responsible for the bourgeoisification of the concept of *ambitsiia* today, the influx of contemporary French literature was at least partially responsible for the proliferation of narratives that invoke *chestoliubie* and *ambitsiia* to signify a desire for upward social mobility in the 1830s-1840s. During these decades, the Russian government tried to ward off social unrest by censoring publications dealing with anti-monarchic political movements abroad: contemporary French literature in particular, with its depiction of men of lowly origin refashioning themselves and their country, was viewed with official suspicion.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, new ideas about social transformation crept into Russia through novels and periodicals, inspiring Russian authors to write their own works about ambition. It was in this

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<sup>60</sup> Mironov, *Sotsial'naiia istoriia*, 1:80.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:138.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 133-38. See also Walter McKinzie Pintner, "Civil Officialdom and the Nobility in the 1850s," in *Russian Officialdom: The Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century*, eds. Pintner and Don Karl Rowley (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 227-249.

<sup>63</sup> Mironov, *Sotsial'naiia istoriia*, 1:139.

<sup>64</sup> Tomashevskii, *Pushkin i Frantsiia*, 169.

context, of social mobility advancing yet officially stymied, that Bulgarin's, Gogol's, Pushkin's, and Dostoevsky's wonderfully weird tales of mad ambition emerged. These tales reveal a struggle to "make sense" of European notions of ambition, even as they strive to articulate native Russian approximations of ambition, and explore the narrative possibilities of a confrontation between the two.

### **A Case of Cultural Contagion: How the Discourse on *Monomanie Ambitieuse* Spread to Russia**

In both Russia and France, the association of ambition with madness dates at least to the late eighteenth century. In Russia, however, where the discourse on mental illness was itself largely imported from France, the government viewed such illness with official suspicion. As Ilya Vinitsky has shown in his article on the subject, Catherine II was especially wary of *melankholiia* (melancholy, an excess of black bile), which she considered a kind of French ideological infection inimical to the Russian social order.<sup>65</sup> One example Vinitsky provides of Catherine's association of melancholy with "political and moral disorder" that is especially relevant to the present study of Russian ambition is her written reaction to Radishchev's *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*.<sup>66</sup> The Empress's notes reveal that for her, *ambitsiia* meant something very similar to French *ambition* (namely, an excessive desire for social elevation), and also that the French discourse on ambition as a passionate imbalance dangerous to society was already making its way to Russia by the early 1790s:

Вероятно кажется что родился с не обузданной амбиции [sic] и готовясь к вышним степеням донныне еще не дошед, желчь, нетерпение разлилось повсюда на все установленное и произвело особое умствование, взятое однако из разных полумудрецов сего века, как то Руссо, Аббе Рейнала и тому гипохондрику подобные [sic].

It is probable that he was born with unbounded ambition, to have prepared himself for the highest offices, but since he has not yet attained them, the gall of his impatience has poured out over everything established, and has produced this philosophizing. But it is drawn from sundry semi-sophists of the present time, such as Rousseau, the Abbé Raynal, and similar hypochondriacs.<sup>67</sup>

Catherine ascribes Radishchev's critique of serfdom to his melancholy constitution, which in her view is the result of either his frustrated ambition, or the pernicious influence of French political thought, or both. Referring elsewhere to the "French confusion" (*frantsuzkie zabluzhdeniia*) and "French poison" (*iad frantsuzkoi*) she believes to have infected Radishchev, here Catherine paradoxically relies on French clinical discourse to defend her regime against French-inspired

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<sup>65</sup> Ilya Vinitsky, "A Cheerful Empress and Her Gloomy Critics: Catherine the Great and the Eighteenth-Century Melancholy Controversy," in *Madness and the Mad in Russian Culture*, eds. Angela Brintlinger and Ilya Vinitsky, 25-51.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>67</sup> Cited in A[bel'] Startsev, *Radishchev, gody ispytaniia* (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), 374; Catherine II, "Empress Catherine's Notes," in Aleksandr Nikolaevich Radishchev, *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, trans. Leo Weiner (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 244.

attacks.<sup>68</sup> Originating in classical Greece and disseminated throughout medieval Europe in the Galenic theory of humors, the term melancholia was commonly applied in the eighteenth century to psychological disorders ranging from depression to madness.<sup>69</sup> Hypochondria, which Catherine ascribes to the Enlightenment thinkers Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Guillaume Raynal (1713-1796), was a particular form of melancholia believed to result from the improper functioning of the hypochondriac, or upper abdominal, region of the body.<sup>70</sup> Catherine's ascription of melancholia to frustrated ambition echoes the diagnoses in early French psychiatric literature that would be made with increasing frequency in the years following the Revolution. Moreover, showing uncertainty as to whether Radishchev's political views are a symptom of an emotional malfunction that is also a physiological malfunction, or else the result of his readings in French Enlightenment philosophy, Catherine is also working through precisely the sort of questions that early psychiatrists were posing in this period about the origin of the passions and their imbalances in both human and socio-political bodies.

According to Jan Goldstein, ambition and the *ambitieux* (ambitious man), were ubiquitous in the psychiatric literature of early nineteenth-century France. Noting the high numbers of "lunatics by ambition" in the post-Revolutionary and especially the post-Napoleonic period, early psychiatrists diagnosed contemporary French society with widespread "ambitious monomania" (*monomanie ambitieuse*).<sup>71</sup> Although she does not emphasize the point, by linking the clinical focus on ambition to the efforts by men like Philippe Pinel (1745-1826) and Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol (1772-1840) to establish the modern science of psychiatry, Goldstein shows that ambition occupied a special place in the history of that field. What female hysteria would be for psychiatrists in the second half of the nineteenth century—namely, the central object of study around which the profession coalesced—male ambition was in the first half. Goldstein notes that what inspired Pinel—a pioneer of the field—to devote himself to the study of madness was his personal experience with an ambitious friend whose frustrated "desire to distinguish himself and acquire knowledge" developed into a "nervous melancholy," then "degenerated into mania," and ultimately resulted in death.<sup>72</sup>

Breaking with the dominant eighteenth-century view that the roots of insanity are physiological, Pinel's *Medico-Philosophical Treatise on Mental Alienation, or Mania (Traité médicophilosophique sur l'aliénation mentale, ou la manie*, 1801), popularized the idea that insanity has "moral"—and hence social—rather than purely physical causes. As Goldstein describes it, the "moral treatment" (*traitement moral*) Pinel advocated included the "therapeutic management of the passions": the clinician's task was to identify and "counterbalance" whatever pathological passion was afflicting the patient.<sup>73</sup> For instance, his *Treatise* suggests that those suffering from "stifled ambition (*ambition rentreé*)" should be given some job or cause to which they might direct their energies, and it relates a case study about a man who is successfully treated this way.<sup>74</sup> In the 1820s, Pinel's student and collaborator Esquirol cited the prevalence of

<sup>68</sup> Cited in Startsev, *Radishchev*, 374.

<sup>69</sup> See Faddei Bulgarin, *Vospominaniia* (Moskva: Zakharov, 2001). Vinitsky, "A Cheerful Empress."

<sup>70</sup> "Hypochondrie," *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers par une société des gens de lettres : mis en ordre & publié par Diderot ; & quant à la partie mathématique, par d'Alembert* (New York: Readex Microprint Corp., 1969).

<sup>71</sup> Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, 160-61.

<sup>72</sup> Pinel, "Observation sur une melancolie nerveuse dégénérée en manie," *Gazette de santé*, 1796, no. 9:34-35, cited in Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, 68-9.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 88, 97.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-44.

*monomanie ambitieuse* in post-Revolutionary France as evidence that mental illnesses were part of the national Zeitgeist. Esquirol considered the rapid succession of new rulers during the post-Revolutionary period responsible for the common occurrence of a form of monomania that led individuals to “believe themselves emperors or kings, empresses or queens.”<sup>75</sup> By recognizing what Goldstein calls the “porousness of monomania to cultural values and changes,” Esquirol and other important psychiatrists in the period succeeded in revising the centuries-old understanding of the passions as universal, physiological phenomena, regarding their manifestations as well as their imbalances as historically and socially conditioned.

Yet even as early psychiatrists like Pinel and Esquirol identified ambitious monomania as a disease characteristic of post-Revolutionary France, their discourse on that disorder spread to Russia, exceeding the geo-political boundaries within which it made clear contemporary sense. In the 1820s, fictional French accounts of mad ambition that incorporate elements of this clinical discourse were translated into Russian and appeared in the periodical press. Without discussing them in detail or contextualizing them with reference to the broader nineteenth-century tradition of ambition narratives, the early twentieth-century Gogol scholar Vasilii Gippius identified two such texts as potential sources of “The Diary of a Madman.”<sup>76</sup> The first, an anonymous Romantic story called “The Mad Man of Ambition” (“Sumasshedshii chestoliubets”) tells of madmen who imagine they are dictators, high-ranking government officials, or philosophers. Published in *The Moscow Telegraph* in 1826,<sup>77</sup> this story is said to be a translation from French, and it is set in the Paris mental hospital Bicêtre, where the French psychiatrist Pinel had actually worked while researching the deleterious effects of ambition and developing his “moral treatment.”<sup>78</sup>

The second of these stories, “Madhouse at Charenton (Fragment from a Traveler’s Notes” (“Dom sumasshedshikh v Sharantone [Otryvok iz zapisok odnogo puteshestvennika]”) appeared anonymously in 1829 in the short-lived journal *Babochka* (*The Butterfly*, 1829-31). Labeled a fragment from a traveler’s notes, this article is presumably a fictional account. Its narrator describes his visit to the French mental hospital at Charenton, which was where the psychiatrist Esquirol—who saw the spread of *monomanie ambitieuse* as the sign of a troubled social order—served as chief physician from 1825 to 1840.<sup>79</sup> At this hospital, the narrator encounters a French officer who resembles the madmen observed by Esquirol and anticipates the protagonist of Gogol’s “The Diary of a Madman” in that he imagines himself to be the king of Spain. In contextualizing ambition within the institutional framework of specific hospitals where psychiatrists had worked to classify and diagnose the disease, “The Mad Man of Ambition” and “Madhouse at Charenton,” and the wider periodical press in which they appeared, served as a conduit through which culturally specific French clinical understandings of ambition traveled to Russia.

The publication of these French stories of mad ambition in Russia can be explained by the interest in insanity characteristic of Russian Romanticism during the 1820s on the one hand,<sup>80</sup> and the endless Russian appetite for all things French, on the other. With its orientation

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>76</sup> Vasilii Gippius, *Gogol*, (1924; repr., Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1963), 91; V[asilii] V[assil’evich] Gippius, *Gogol*, trans. Robert Maguire (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1989), 79.

<sup>77</sup> The bi-monthly *Moscow Telegraph* published Russian and European literature and articles on the arts, sciences and society at home and abroad.

<sup>78</sup> Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, 71.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>80</sup> For a list of Russian works on the theme of madness from the 1820s and 1830s, see Gippius, *Gogol*, 91; *Gogol*, 79.

toward the unusual, the irrational, and the original, toward uncontrollable passions that propel a collision between the exceptional individual and society, Romanticism arose contemporaneously with the modern European psychiatric profession. The French tales of mad ambition published in the Russian periodicals suggest that Romantic literature sampled freely from clinical discourse on madness, turning that discourse into narrative material. The appearance of “The Mad Man of Ambition” in Polevoi’s *The Moscow Telegraph* is in keeping with that journal’s promotion of French Romanticism.<sup>81</sup> “Madhouse at Charenton” similarly exemplifies the habitual publication of miscellaneous French news stories, anecdotes, and articles in Russian translation in *The Butterfly*. For instance, the issue that includes “Charenton” also features a snippet about French and English enthusiasm for Turkish-style spurs, a blurb about a new French company established to distribute artesian water, various French historical factoids, and two articles—including what is by far the longest piece in the journal—said to have been originally published in the French newspaper *Le Voleur* (*The Thief*).

“Madhouse at Charenton” purports to be an excerpt from a traveler’s notes. This claim is troubled, however, by the final tagline, “Reported (Soobshcheno), which makes it seem like the story has been transcribed by someone who either read or heard the original account. Nevertheless, no answers are given to the questions of whether an original French text of the story actually exists, and if so, who wrote it. The chaotic layout of *The Butterfly* makes it difficult to tell whether the piece is part of the section titled News (*Novosti*), the one titled Miscellany (*Smes’*), or rather a part of no particular section. In any case, the piece is not a part of the Literature (*Slovesnost’*) section. The lack of clarity about why, under what circumstances, and by whom “Charenton” was written, and about what kind of classification the piece might be given points to the ambiguity of origin and intention characterizing much of the French literature about ambition and other subjects circulating in the Russian periodicals during this time. As for “The Mad Man of Ambition,” the only information the journal provides about its source is the abbreviated note at the end: “From Fr.” (*Sfrants.*). This nebulous citation bolsters the sense the story itself gives of mad ambition as something French, but pervasive rather than particular to any one Frenchman. Thus, these stories exemplify the free-floating French discourse on mad ambition that seeped into Russia through the periodicals, in accordance with a much broader trend of printing French news, literature, and trivia. By exploring “Mad Man” and “Charenton” in greater detail before moving on to an exploration of Bulgarin’s and Gogol’s mad ambition tales, I shall identify the key features of the rhetoric on mad ambition they employ with the ultimate goal of understanding how the piecemeal importation of French literary treatments of this disorder through the periodicals helped to shape Gogol’s narrative style in “The Diary of a Madman.”

“The Mad Man of Ambition” presents itself as a quasi-scientific tale that diagnoses post-Revolutionary France with widespread *chestoliubie*. Taking this word as a translation of *ambition*, I therefore translate it as “ambition.” While I have been unable to locate an original French text of this story, assuming that one did exist, its title is likely to have been “Le fou ambitieux.” In a passage from which I have taken the epigraph to this chapter, the narrator describes ambition as a pernicious “passion” that can result in madness:

Из бесчисленного множества причин способствующих заблуждению ума человеческого, есть одна, сильнее всех других действующая и всех более поразительная: это честолюбие. Мои слова могут быть доказаны всеми

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<sup>81</sup> See Popkova, “Odin iz zamechatel’neishikh deiatelei.”

заведениями для лишенных ума: так, справедливо, что сия страсть, более всех других занимает наш ум и вмешивается, так сказать, во все происшествия жизни!<sup>82</sup>

Among the countless many causes of the derangement of the human mind, there is one that is stronger and is more debilitating than all the others: ambition. My words can be proven by all the institutions for the insane: so, it is right that this passion, more than any other, occupies our mind and intervenes, as it were, in all the events of our lives!

Without identifying himself as a psychiatrist, or acknowledging the scholarly sources of his claims about mad ambition, the narrator claims to have broad knowledge of conditions in mental institutions, and he addresses his readers as though sharing privileged clinical information with the less informed. Like the psychiatrist Pinel, the narrator describes mad ambition as a passion that has social as well as physiological origins. While he considers the desire to rise above one's current social station to be a natural instinct, he also asserts that certain socio-political environments are especially likely to foster it:

Но сей феномен всего более является в тех обстоятельствах, когда великие политические выгоды оковывают души всех. Например, никогда в Бисетрском доме (в Париже) не бывало такого множества сумасшедших сего рода, как в то время, когда все волновалось в Франции для восстановления прав и законов.

But this phenomenon appears most often in those circumstances in which great political advantages shackle everyone's souls. For example, there were never so many madmen of this type in Bicêtre (in Paris) as there were at that time when all France was agitating for the establishment of new rights and laws.<sup>83</sup>

As seen here in the narrator's reference to scrambling for "political advantages," ambition is glossed in this story as a thirst for political power rather than for commercial or professional success. Indeed, the narrator identifies the madman's deluded identification with a royal or other high-ranking military or government personage as the most common form of mad ambition. The tendency of ambitious madmen to entertain self-aggrandizing delusions of political and military power belies the influence of Napoleon—the *ambitieux par excellence*—on the discourse of ambition in the period. If the story of Napoleon inspired countless people of low rank, "The Mad Man of Ambition," and similar tales written during the Bourbon Restoration seem to work against that democratizing trend by representing Napoleonic ambition as irrational and even insane.

Against the background of many cases of mad ambition in Bicêtre, "The Mad Man of Ambition" focuses on one in particular, that of a melancholic, would-be Napoleon named Ansel'm, who goes mad from his frustrated "desire to rise above others" (*zhelanie prevzoiti*).<sup>84</sup> At night, he dreams that he is a king or an emperor; during the daytime, as though following Napoleon's example of restructuring the French legal system, he writes new legal codes and sends them to various heads of state for adoption.<sup>85</sup> When his projects are not implemented, he

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<sup>82</sup> "Sumasshedshii chestoliubets," 89.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-90.

<sup>84</sup> "Sumasshedshii chestoliubets," 98.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 99, 101.

dies of despair and a heart attack.<sup>86</sup> Unlike French psychiatrists such as Pinel, who believed people could be treated successfully for stifled ambition, the narrator of “The Mad Man of Ambition” portrays this disease as incurable:

Таков страшный дух сей ненасытимой страсти, что она почти всегда пожирает того, кого останавливают препятствия, и поедает то сердце, в котором возгорелась! Если раз вопьется она в душу—человек напрасно думает об исправлении себя. . . . [Р]абы, которых [честолюбие] влачит за собою, могут насладиться миром только в могиле.<sup>87</sup>

Such is the terrible spirit of this insatiable passion that it almost always devours the one who is halted by obstacles, and it devours the heart in which it has flared up! If it bites into the soul even once, it is futile for a person to think of correcting himself. . . . The slaves led along by [ambition] can enjoy peace only in the grave.

This account of ambition as an insatiable parasite devouring its victims from within recurs throughout this and other stories of mad ambition, and it may have inspired Gogol’s explanation of Chichikov’s unceasing desire to acquire in *Dead Souls* as the symptom of a “worm, despotically drawing all life’s juices to itself” (*samovlastno obrativshii k sebe vse zhiznennye soki*).<sup>88</sup> “The Mad Man of Ambition” also anticipates *Dead Souls* in its association of ambition with perpetual movement through boundless space and time:

Честолюбивые всегда стремятся к неопределенным целям. Бесперывные оптические обольщения подстрекают или направляют их. Еще не успели они достигнуть той цели, к которой стремились, как очарование для них уже исчезло. Они вечно находятся на неизмеримом поле, где всегда для них есть что-то неизвестное, предмет их желаний.

The ambitious always strive for undefined goals. Unceasing optical illusions urge them on or direct them. They still haven’t reached the goal they were striving for when its charm has already vanished. They eternally find themselves in an immeasurable field, where there is always something unknown for them, the object of their desires.<sup>89</sup>

In this description, people with ambition are continuously looking outside themselves for satisfaction—as though to feed the parasite gnawing at them from within—but their relationship to space and time is such that they can never reach their goals. Like Chichikov, who is last seen riding off into the distance at the end of *Dead Souls*, the “ambitious ones” figured in this passage move through “immeasurable” space toward an ever-receding future, never able to reach the *there* or the *then* of their dreams.

In “The Mad Man of Ambition,” the boundlessness of Ansel’m’s desires contrasts sharply with the bounded space of Bicêtre, the walls of which are meant to contain him and curtail his striving. Bicêtre appears in the story as an institution existing largely for the purpose

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>88</sup> Gogol, *Mertvye dushi*, 231; Gogol, *Dead Souls*, 247.

<sup>89</sup> “Sumasshedshii chestoliubets,” 99.

of keeping men with delusions of political grandeur locked up where they cannot threaten the fragile social order of Restoration France. The narrator explicitly states that the function of the mental hospital is to impose physical limits on the otherwise boundless ambition of the madmen interred there: “[Ansel’m] died from the disease of ambition in that very room, where they squeezed out his existence and restricted his desires” ([*Ansel’m umer ot bolezni chestoliubiia v toi samoi komnatke, gde szhali ego sushchestvovanie i ogranichili zhelaniia*]).<sup>90</sup> Closing his story with the image of Ansel’m devoured by inner ambition and “squeezed” to death by the walls of his room at Bicêtre, the narrator presents the ambitious madman as someone caught between his own uncontrollable biological and socially determined impulses and institutional efforts to keep would-be Napoleons locked safely away.

Containing the passions of its patients, Bicêtre is also an architectural representation of the way “The Mad Man of Ambition” contains ambition by pathologizing it and foreclosing the possibility of its realization. Diagnosing ambition as a cause of madness, the narrator allies himself with those who would seek to restrain it. The control the narrator exercises over the passion he calls uncontrollable is an aesthetic response to a question of growing concern in the post-Revolutionary period—that of whether and how pernicious passions like ambition could be controlled or counteracted. Still, the narrator of “The Mad Man of Ambition” does not adopt a didactic or moralizing tone. Instead, he presents mad ambition as a sensational “curiosity.” His insistence on the “curiosity” of madness in general and mad ambition in particular shows that the primary aim of this quasi-scientific tale is to entertain:

Безумцев любопытно слушать, потому что они возмущены каким-то страстным вдохновением, среди которого из головы их могут излетать светлые мысли; чего не бывает с тихими людьми, живущими в обыкновенном круге жизненных привычек.<sup>91</sup>

Madmen are curious to listen to, because they are agitated by some kind of passionate inspiration, in the midst of which ‘bright thoughts’ can fly from their heads, which doesn’t happen with calm people, living in the ordinary circle of lived habits.

This is a programmatic statement of the Romantic reassessment of madness, its new value deriving from the madman’s ability to express extraordinary ideas. The narrator’s statement that it is “curious” (*liubopytno*) to listen to madmen both distances him and his readers from the exotic subject of his story (the ambitious madman) and functions as a cue to readers to view that story with curiosity. For Russian readers, this story would have been doubly curious, because it presents mad ambition as an explicitly foreign—French—phenomenon.

In sharp contrast to Stendhal’s and Balzac’s novels of ambition, in “The Mad Man of Ambition” the narrative interest centers on the diagnosis and explication of mad ambition, rather than the ambitious character’s attempted rise in society. Readers’ desires are not allied with Ansel’m’s ambition, but are mirrored in the narrator and “society’s” curiosity about it:

Ансельм в это время был предметом общего любопытства. О нем часто говорили в свете, и не было человека, который не любопытствовал-бы узнать всю его историю. Многие уверяли, что знали его прежде нежели он лишился ума и каждый, с

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 94.

большими или меньшими подробностями, рассказывал о нем анекдоты. Мы слушали сии различные рассказы с такою-же жадностью как и нетерпением.<sup>92</sup>

Ansel'm was at that time an object of general curiosity. They often talked about him in society, and there was no one who would not have been curious to know his story. Many asserted that they knew him before he lost his mind, and everyone, with greater or lesser detail, told anecdotes about him. We listened to these various stories with just as much thirst as impatience.

Here, mad ambition appears as a subject both fascinating and familiar to French society. The madman's desire for elevation matches the public's—and potentially the readers'—desire to know the “history” of his malady. Whereas Peter Brooks suggests that in Balzac's and Stendhal's novels, the hero's ambition spurs the reader on until the point at which “the ends of ambition have been clarified,”<sup>93</sup> this story models readers' desire as a curiosity about the origins, rather than the ends, of ambition.

In “Madhouse at Charenton,” the narrator describes his encounter with several patients who suffer from self-aggrandizing delusions. The first is an eloquent artillery officer who has plans to improve the operations of the hospital and to write a new constitution, believing that he is the king of Spain:

«Да Милостивый Государь, возразил он, если я только приведу к концу мой план новой Испанской конституции, то надеюсь поправить заведение Шарантонское; покуда должен я смотреть на все то сквозь пальцы и терпеть многие несообразности. Беспокойные головы моих подданных, на жалком полуострове, много меня озабочивают!» тот несчастный был Артиллерийский Офицер, который воображал, что он—*Испанский Король*.<sup>94</sup>

“Yes Dear Sir, he replied, if I can only complete my plan for a new Spanish constitution, then I hope to improve the Charenton institution; for now I have to look the other way and suffer many absurdities. The troubled heads of my subjects on the poor peninsula worry me much!” This unfortunate was an Artillery Officer, who imagined that he was the *Spanish King*.

After noting this man's deluded claim to the Spanish throne, the narrator immediately moves on to a description of the other madmen he encounters “among the crowd of unfortunates” (*mezhdutolpoiuneschastnykh*).<sup>95</sup> Implying that the stories they contain are examples of a widespread phenomenon, “The Mad Man of Ambition” and “Madhouse at Charenton” present French mental hospitals as spaces thronging with ambitious madmen and sane men curious about them and eager to narrate their stories.

By abstracting French tales of mad ambition from their original context in space and time, translating them into Russian, and inserting them haphazardly alongside articles pertaining to a variety of distant countries and unrelated subjects, the periodicals that facilitated the transfer

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>93</sup> Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 39.

<sup>94</sup> “Dom sumasshedshikh,” 134.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

of mad ambition to Russia presented ambition to Russian readers as essentially anomalous and anachronistic. The ambiguity of origin and the free-floating quality of the French discourse on mad ambition in these periodicals contrasts sharply with the original rootedness of that discourse in specific social and historical conditions. While psychiatrists had asserted that *monomanie ambitieuse* was a mental disorder particular to post-Revolutionary France, Romantic literature carried the discourse on mad ambition abroad to Russia, where it not only met readers' desire for "curiosities," but also inspired original works on the same subject. Translating recognizable elements of French clinical discourse on ambition into Russian, "The Mad Man of Ambition" and "Madhouse at Charenton" make that discourse available for use by Russian authors who, for their part, show what this socially specific passionate imbalance might look like in a radically different social milieu.

### **Ambition in the Pro-government Press: Bulgarin's "Three Pages from a Madhouse"**

In his 1834 story "Three Pages from a Madhouse, or the Psychological Healing of an Incurable Disease (The First Extract from the Notes of an Old Doctor)" ("Tri listka iz doma sumasshedshikh, ili Psikhicheskoe itselenie neizlechimoj bolezni [Pervoe izvlechenie iz Zapisok starogo vracha]") Faddei Bulgarin uses the French rhetoric of mad ambition to present *chestoliubie* as a physical and moral illness, and also to prescribe a cure for those who suffer from it.<sup>96</sup> The story was published in *The Northern Bee* (*Severnaia pchela*, 1825-1864), the newspaper Bulgarin edited and the only non-government periodical permitted to publish political news in Russia in the 1830s. As a semi-official commercial newspaper, *The Northern Bee* occupied a somewhat awkward position in the market, publishing news of European social movements to boost sales, but shaping European coverage so as to promote pro-government Russian ideals. Borrowing the exciting French theme of mad ambition found in stories like "The Mad Man of Ambition," in his own story Bulgarin warns readers directly against the desire for elevation on the Table of Ranks. Nevertheless, what is so interesting about "Three Pages" is that despite the narrator's unequivocal condemnation of ambition, the story as a whole shows just how complex Russian attitudes toward it were in the 1830s.

Appealing to French clinical literature to imbue his work with scientific authority, Bulgarin begins with an epigraph from the physiologist and materialist philosopher Pierre Jean George Cabanis (1757-1808). Today, Cabanis is best known for propounding the view that all aspects of mental and emotional life—including mental illnesses—are physiological in origin.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, like his younger friend Pinel, whose studies of mad ambition and method of "moral treatment" I have already discussed, Cabanis also argued that environmental, social factors could contribute to the development of mental illnesses, and, contrarily, aid in their cure. Taken from Cabanis' treatise, *On the Relations between the Physical and Moral Aspects of Man*

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<sup>96</sup> On Bulgarin's life and political views and on *The Northern Bee*, see N. N. Akimova, *F. B. Bulgarin: Literaturnaia reputatsiia i kul'turnyi mif* (Khabarovsk: Khabarovskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet, 2002); Angela Brintlinger and Ilya Vinitsky, eds., *Madness and the mad in Russian culture* (University of Toronto Press, 2007); A. E. Reitblat, ed., *Vidok Figliarin. Pis'ma i agenturnye zapiski Faddeia Bulgarina v III otdelenie* (Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1998); M. B. Pliukhanova, "Literaturnaia pozitsiia 'Severnoi pchely' (1825-1829 gg.)," *Sbornik studencheskikh nauchnykh rabot. Kratkie soobshcheniia: Literaturovedenie. Lingvistika* (Tartu: Tartuskii gos., un-t., 1973), 18-19.

<sup>97</sup> Goldstein, *Console and Classify*, 49-55.

(*Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme*, 1802), which helped lay the foundations for modern French medicine, the epigraph Bulgarin selects sets a confident and didactic tone for his tale.<sup>98</sup>

L'observation et l'expérience nous ayant fait découvrir les moyens de combattre assez souvent avec succès, l'état de maladie, l'art qui met en usage ces moyens, peut donc modifier et perfectionner les opérations de l'intelligence et les habitudes de la volonté.<sup>99</sup>

Observation and experience have led us discover the means to combat, often enough with success, the state of illness; the art that employs these means can then modify and perfect the operations of intelligence and the habits of the will.

Together with this French epigraph, the Russian subtitle of Bulgarin's story—"The Psychological Healing of an Incurable Disease"—suggests that the rapidly developing French science of psychiatry can be effectively integrated into Russian medical practice and literary reflection so as to cure even the most stubborn psychological disorders. Subsequently, Bulgarin's story models how this process works for the benefit of individual Russian subjects and society as a whole.

Like the "The Mad Man of Ambition," Bulgarin's "Three Pages" centers on the narrator's diagnosis of mad ambition and description of its origins and effects. Unlike "Mad Man," however, in Bulgarin's story the narrator is explicitly a doctor, and the plot moves beyond the diagnosis of mad ambition to its successful cure. In both stories, ambition appears in the Russian form of *chestoliubie*, but whereas in "Mad Man" *chestoliubie* can be understood as a translation of French *ambition*, in "Three Pages" this word is used with its specifically Russian connotation of excessive desire for promotion in service to the state. Notably, Bulgarin compares this Russian concept of *chestoliubie* to the French notion of mad ambition as a disorder that produces delusions of political rule: his narrator uses a story about the French type of mad ambition as a negative example with which to cure his Russian patient of *chestoliubie*. Thus, the cure for mad ambition Bulgarin presents in "Three Pages" turns out to be a unique mixture of Russian and French moral medicine.

The story begins when the doctor-narrator responds to a sick young man's call for help and attempts to diagnose his illness by studying his physiognomy: "He was pale and dry, and his hollow cheeks reflected a yellow color. The flame of youth had not yet gone out in his eyes, but they were already lifeless" (*On byl bleden i sukh, a vpalye ego shcheki otrazhalis' zhelytym tsvetom. Eshche ogon' iunosti ne potukh v glazakh ego, no oni uzhe byli bezhiznenny*).<sup>100</sup> Although the man displays physical symptoms of illness, the doctor cannot at first determine what is the matter. Hearing that the patient has been feeling restless and bored, and has lost his appetite as well as his interest in life and society, the doctor diagnoses him with "hypochondria" (*gipokhondriia*), the same form of melancholia Catherine II ascribes to Rousseau and Raynal in her notes on Radishchev's *A Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*.<sup>101</sup> Still, the doctor cannot

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Included in the original text of Bulgarin's story in *The Northern Bee*, this epigraph is missing from the most accessible reprint of Bulgarin's story, found in Iu. M. Medvedeva, ed., *Biblioteka russkoi fantastiki* (Moskva: Russkaia kniga, 1990-2000). Other than this epigraph, citations from Bulgarin's "Three Pages" refer to the reprint in *Biblioteka russkoi fantastiki*.

<sup>100</sup> Bulgarin, "Tri listka," 360.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

determine the roots of the disease: “the causes were shrouded in mystery, which I could not penetrate” (*prichiny pokryty byli tainoi, kotoroi ia ne mog proniknut*).<sup>102</sup>

Echoing the historical process whereby ambition made the social conditioning of the passions apparent to early French psychiatrists, Bulgarin leads his doctor-narrator to the eventual discovery that the origin of the patient’s illness is not physiological but social. One day he observes the young man reading and responding violently to the news of promotions and decorations in the official government newspaper, *St. Petersburg Senate News* (*Sankt-Peterburgskie senatskie vedomosti*, 1811-1917):

Пациент мой читал «Сенатские ведомости». Глаза его налиты были кровью, щеки горели, уста тряслись, и он то вертелся на стуле, то вскакивал, ударяя по столу кулаками.

—Посмотрите, доктор, можно ли и стоит ли после этого жить на свете!— воскликнул он, задыхаясь и потрясая листом газеты.—Все люди, которых я знаю, как самого себя, люди, у которых нет столько ума и способности в башке, сколько у меня в мизинце! Люди – машины!.. А вот один из них начальником отделения, другой директором, третий правителем канцелярии, четвертый губернатором!.. Все обвешаны орденами!.. А я... я...!

—Он не мог продолжать, бросил газету и, взглянув на меня жалостно, залился слезами.

—Look, doctor, is it possible and worthwhile to live in this world after this?!—he cried, gasping and shaking the sheet of newspaper.—All these people I know as well as myself, people who don't have as much brains and ability in their noggins as I have in my pinky! These people—they're machines!.. And here one is made into the manager of a section, another the director, a third the chief of the chancelry, a fourth governor!.. They're all decorated with orders!.. And I... I...!

—He couldn't continue; he threw down the newspaper and, looking at me pitifully, let his tears flow.<sup>103</sup>

From the patient’s protestations against the undeserved promotions of others, the doctor-narrator deduces that the young man is suffering from ambition: “Finally, I was able to look into his soul, and I saw a worm nesting in it, gnawing at it tirelessly. . . . The worm, gnawing the soul of my patient was called *ambition*” (*Nakonets, mne udalos’ zaglianut’ v dushu ego, i ia uvidel gnezdiashchegosia v nei chervia, gryzushchego ego neusypno. . . . Cherv’, gryzushchii dushu moego patsienta, nazyvalsia chestoliubie*).<sup>104</sup> Bulgarin’s figuration of ambition as a “worm” that is “gnawing” at the young man’s soul recalls the rhetoric of ambition as a parasitic wasting disease in “The Mad Man of Ambition.” He adds a religious connotation to that rhetoric, however, by bringing to mind the biblical “worm of doubt” (*cherv’ somnenia*) that corrodes faith in God. In this case, ambition acts as a “worm of doubt” corroding the patient’s faith in the Russian social order.

As a manifestation of pride, which is itself a grave sin in Orthodox doctrine, ambition is here shown to be spiritually and socially as well as physically parasitic. The doctor refers to it as

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 361.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

a “spiritual and mental illness” (*bolezn’ dushi i bolezn’ uma*), and he holds it responsible for the young man’s protests against the arbitrariness of the Table of Ranks. Reinforcing the sense of ambition as hostile to the state, Bulgarin’s narrator relates that it has led the patient to cease working in the bureaucracy:

Пациент мой, ища быстрого возвышения и начальника, который бы заметил необыкновенные его способности, беспрестанно переменил места и наконец остался вовсе без места, в ожидании необыкновенного случая к возвышению. Уплывающее бесполезно время, унося с собою старшинство по службе, ниспадало на сердце его по каплям, как растопленный свинец, и делало неисцелимые язвы.

My patient, looking for speedy elevation and a superior who might recognize his extraordinary abilities, continuously changed places and was finally left with no place at all, in the expectation of an extraordinary chance at promotion. Time, passing uselessly by, and taking with it the possibility of attaining seniority through service, fell upon his heart like drop after drop of molten steel, rendering his sores incurable.<sup>105</sup>

With its depiction of the ambitious man’s restless movement from one “place” in the bureaucracy to another, this passage introduces readers to what will become the distinguishing features of all texts in the Petersburg mad ambition tradition: the madman’s predicament of being perpetually *out of place* as he indulges in a frenzied search around the capital city for a change in social status.

But whereas Gogol, Pushkin, and Dostoevsky bring readers along with the ambitious heroes who rove the city streets in search of new and higher “places,” Bulgarin, by contrast, remains true to the narrative model of mad ambition as seen in “The Mad Man of Ambition” and “Madhouse at Charenton.” In “Three Pages,” ambition does not produce a narrative of social striving. Instead, it has already paralyzed its victim before the story begins, leaving him without the desire to act or the ability to work. The story focuses on the doctor’s attempts to eradicate the patient’s ambition: “Not being in the position to satiate the greed of that worm, I decided to kill it” (*Ne buduchi v sostoianii nasytit’ zhadnosti etogo chervia, ia reshilsia umorit’ ego*).<sup>106</sup> Ambition is here presented as a form of madness that leads to a questioning of the Russian social order and a refusal to participate productively in it: curing the patient of that disorder is thus tantamount to quelling an anti-government protest.

Using storytelling as a form of “moral treatment,” Bulgarin’s narrator shares a story of European mad ambition with his patient. Notably, this narrative gesture inscribes the transmission of French stories about mad ambition to a Russian audience. Whereas the narrator of “The Mad Man of Ambition” describes the French public’s “thirst” for anecdotes about madmen, the narrator of “Three Sheets” relies on his Russian patient’s interest in such “curious anecdotes” to cure him of his pathological ambition:

Однажды я завел речь о сумасшествии и рассказал ему несколько любопытных анекдотов, которые обратили его внимание на этот предмет. Заметив это, я

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

рассказал ему происшествие, которое нарочно берег для него, как лекарство, намереваясь употребить при первом удобном случае.<sup>107</sup>

One day I started up a conversation about insanity and told him a few curious anecdotes, which turned his attention to that subject. Noticing this, I told him about an occurrence which I was saving on purpose for him, like a medicine, intending to use it at the first suitable moment.

The “medicinal” story the narrator subsequently recounts to his patient concerns a former patient living “in one of the European capitals” (*v odnoi iz evropeiskikh stolits*).<sup>108</sup> This patient closely resembles the ambitious madmen of the French stories “Mad Man” and “Charenton” in his delusions of power: “He ceaselessly occupied himself with writing, imagining that he was running a government. He wrote orders, projects, distributed jobs and ranks, gave out millions, made reprimands” (*On besprestanno zanimalsia pis'mom, voobrazhaia, chto upravliaet gosudarstvom. On pisal prikazaniia, proekty, razdaval mesta i chiny, daril millionami, delal vygovory*).<sup>109</sup> Notably, in Bulgarin’s tale of pathological *chestoliubie*, even a European madman is preoccupied with “rank” (*razdaval mesta i chiny*).

Like Ansel’m in “The Mad Man of Ambition,” this former patient of Bulgarin’s doctor-narrator wasted away and died from ambition. He left the doctor his diary, however, which consists of the eponymous “three pages from a madhouse.” In the diary, which the doctor shares with his present patient, the foreign madman gives a fantastical account of his ambitious past.<sup>110</sup> He claims to have existed for 310 years and lived three lives, one of which is described in each of the “three pages.” In his first life he was an ambitious misanthrope who became a famous millionaire. Mysteriously reborn after a hundred years, in his second life he learned that despite his previous fame and fortune, no one remembered him, and so he devoted this second life to the “common good” (*obshchego blaga*): he got married, had children, and lived the life of a generous provincial landowner, taking good care of his peasants, and helping those in need.<sup>111</sup> In his third life, he found his descendants and the descendants of his peasants thriving and remembering what a good man he had been. Yet somehow he failed to learn from his past experience and again fell under the sway of ambition.

The madman’s “three pages” effectively cure the doctor’s current patient of his own mad ambition. Several years after his recovery, he tells the doctor of the healthy life he has lived since reading the diary:

Да, я, прежний глупец, который чахнул от честолюбия и растолстел, следуя рецепту, прописанному сумасшедшим, во втором листке! Я живу в деревне, женат, имею троих детей, красивых, как купидончики, занимаюсь садоводством, земледелием, благосостоянием моих крестьян, любим, уважаем соседями—и совершенно счастлив! Теперь не все люди кажутся мне несносными, не все книги скучными, а «Сенатские ведомости» читаю я только для указов и вовсе не

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 363-67.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 365.

заглядываю в производство, ибо ценю людей по мере пользы, оказываемой ими человечеству.<sup>112</sup>

Yes, I am the former dolt who was wasting away from ambition and grew fat following the recipe prescribed by the madman in the second sheet! I live in the country, I am married, I have three children who are as beautiful as little cupids, I work on my garden, I farm, I concern myself with the well-being of my serfs, I am loved and respected by my neighbors—and I am completely happy! Now people do not all seem unbearable to me, books are not all boring, and I only read the *Senate News* for the *ukazes* and don't look at the promotions at all, because I value people according to their usefulness to humanity.

While both the disease (mad ambition) and its stated cure (the principle of “moral treatment” through a retelling of a former case) have European origins, Bulgarin uses them to prescribe the traditional life of a Russian serf-holding landowner. In this way, Bulgarin's story once again recalls Catherine II's notes on Radishchev's *Journey*, in which the Empress uses French clinical discourse to diagnose Radishchev as an ambitious madman infected by French ideas: Bulgarin, too, mobilizes the French discourse on mad ambition to support the legitimacy of the Russian feudal order.

If the European disease of ambition is a challenge to the existing system, then Bulgarin's story tells us how we can be better, more obedient citizens. Like the European madman's “three pages,” Bulgarin's own story is thus presented as moral “medicine.” The diary form of the framed narrative, which consists of three pages from three separate days, models the form of Bulgarin's story, an “Extract from the Notes of an Old Doctor” printed on multiple days—and on multiple “pages”—in *The Northern Bee*. Whereas the European diary gives a cyclical account of several lives lived and offers a new perspective on ambition in each page, Bulgarin's story implies that if readers keep coming back to his newspaper for a daily dose of moral treatment, they will not only be entertained, but will be generally happier and healthier for it. In other words, reading the pages of *The Northern Bee* can keep Russians from madly “gasping and shaking the page” (*zadykhaias' i potriasaia listom*) on which the promotions are printed in the *Senate News*.<sup>113</sup>

Whatever solutions it proposes, Bulgarin's story reveals the conflicting cues Russian periodicals like *The Northern Bee* and even the state-issued *Senate News* were giving to Russian citizens at this time. For instance, in the early 1830s *The Northern Bee* provided Russian readers with the true story of an ongoing insurrection in Spain. Led by Carlos, the brother of the recently deceased king of Spain, Ferdinand VII, the unfolding Spanish crisis of succession gave ambition a potentially subversive charge.<sup>114</sup> As the Russian critic Igor Zolotussky points out in an article that explores *The Northern Bee* as an intertext for Gogol's “The Diary of a Madman,” Bulgarin's newspaper relied on sensational foreign news like Carlos' insurrection to captivate the attention

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 368.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 361. “Shaking the sheet” is the seditious gesture that reveals to Bulgarin's doctor-narrator that his patient is suffering from mad ambition earlier in the story.

<sup>114</sup> Before his death, Ferdinand had revoked a law preventing female heirs from succeeding to the throne, thus making way for his daughter Isabella to become Queen. However, after his death ultra-royalists led by Carlos mounted an insurrection, fighting for years in a futile attempt to establish Carlos as king. Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 722-25. It is worth noting that precisely the reverse situation prevailed in Russia: Paul I legalized the principle of male primogeniture in 1797, thereby preventing women from ever acceding to the throne.

of Russian readers, and it reported on Carlos' attempts to claim the throne throughout 1834, even dedicating a regular column to the "Spanish affairs" (*Ispanskije dela*).<sup>115</sup> Printing "Three Pages" alongside reports of the insurrection, *The Northern Bee* provided an antidote to mad ambition even as it arguably spread the disease.

Moreover, Bulgarin's story suggests that such contradictory imperatives could also be found on the pages of the *Senate News*, the official newspaper that printed news of promotions and decorations as well as Imperial *ukazes*. By celebrating promotions and decorations, the *Senate News* incited the very ambition Bulgarin's story portrays as a threat to the social order. "Three Pages" thus points to a larger tension between the Table of Ranks and the estate-based structure of Russian society. On one hand, the state rewarded service in the bureaucracy and military with promotions advertised in the *Senate News*. On the other hand, as seen in Bulgarin's story and Gogol's "The Diary of a Madman," the upward social mobility afforded by the Table of Ranks could inspire low-ranking members of society to question the legitimacy of social stratification. It is no wonder, then, that the patient in Bulgarin's story overcome his ambition only by escaping St. Petersburg. It is as if there is no room in the capital for a person to live in health and harmony with all the edicts of the state.

### **The Strange Twang of Cultural Discord: Gogol's "The Diary of a Madman"**

In "The Diary of a Madman" ("Zapiski sumasshedshego," 1835), Gogol exploits the contradictions inherent in ongoing debates, both medical and literary, on ambition.<sup>116</sup> Gogol's story specifically incorporates and transforms the Romantic literary treatment of mad ambition found in the anonymous stories "The Mad Man of Ambition," "Madhouse at Charenton," and Bulgarin's "Three Pages from a Madhouse." He parodies Bulgarin's moralistic account of mad ambition, yet he offers readers no single, clear alternative to Bulgarin's perspective on the disorder. Instead, he confronts them with competing perspectives on ambition that structure the story and combine to provoke the protagonist's descent into madness. In "The Diary" it is madness itself (rather than its treatment) that is imbued with metaliterary significance. As a chaotic psychological jumble of European and Russian perspectives on ambition, Poprishchin's madness is also related to creative genius, the inspiration to write. Similarly, the multiplicity of literary and cultural models of ambition circulating in Russian periodicals of the 1820s-1830s sparked Gogol's own creativity. "The Diary" is the story of Aksenty Poprishchin, a titular councilor who longs for promotion in the civil service and a romantic union with his director's daughter, and whose blocked ambitions lead to madness and incarceration. Like Bulgarin, Gogol invokes the bureaucracy as a native Russian context onto which the originally French narrative model of mad ambition is transposed. The Table of Ranks fires the madman's ambition even as it keeps him locked in place.

As several critics have noted, the madman's symptoms essentially amount to a protest against the bureaucracy, and his final delusion, that he is not a titular councilor but rather the incognito king of Spain, can be seen as an attempted escape from the social position he occupies

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<sup>115</sup> Igor Zolotusky, "The Diary of a Madman and the *Severnaya Pchela*," *Soviet Literature*, no. 10 (1975): 38-52.

<sup>116</sup> "Zapiski sumasshedshego" was first published under the title "Klochki iz zapiskok sumasshedshego" in the collection *Arabeski. Razny sochineniia N. Gogolia, ch. 2-ia*, (St. Petersburg, 1835).

as a copy clerk of middling rank.<sup>117</sup> Yet existing critical discussions of the social ramifications of “The Diary” might still benefit from a consideration of how the tale appropriates and transforms French literary and cultural models of ambition. Like Bulgarin’s “Three Pages,” Gogol’s story compares and combines the French notion of mad ambition as a delusion of *political* grandeur with the Russian notion of *chestoliubie* as an excessive desire for *professional* promotion: yet Poprishchin’s frustrated Russian *chestoliubie* ultimately turns into a French kind of *ambition*.

Although he does treat ambition as a form of insanity, Gogol departs from the Romantic tradition of representing this disorder as an exotic phenomenon that readers can view from a comfortable spatio-temporal distance and with epistemological and emotional detachment. Whereas the madmen in “The Mad Man of Ambition,” “Madhouse at Charenton,” and “Three Pages from a Madhouse” have already been confined in mental asylums or become otherwise isolated from society before these stories even begin, “The Diary of a Madman” follows its ambitious protagonist around Petersburg on a narrative journey that ends with his confinement. Furthermore, Gogol presents his story as the diary, or “notes” (*zapiski*), of the ambitious madman himself, eliminating the dominant narrative perspective of the doctor. These shifts in the narrative perspective—from narration of past ambitions that have already been blocked and contained to narration of present ambitions still being pursued, and from narrative objectification of an ambitious other to an ambitious man’s subjective presentation of his feelings and desires—shape Gogol’s unprecedented plot of mad Russian ambition and produce its peculiarly ambivalent tone. I will examine these shifts, and their impact on Gogol’s plot and tone, in turn.

In “The Diary of a Madman” as in Stendhal’s and Balzac’s novels, ambition propels the movements of the protagonist and the plot. At the beginning of the story, Poprishchin states his ambitions and shows he is still hoping for their realization. For instance, he alludes to his interest in his director’s daughter, Sophie, wishing that the fondness for him the director displays would be matched by a similar feeling in her: “I notice, though, that he has a special liking for me. If only the daughter also... ah, confound it! . . . Never mind, never mind, silence!” (*Ia zamechaiu, odnako zhe, chto on menia osobenno liubit. Esli by dochka... ekh, kanal’stvo!.. Nichego, nichego, molchanie!*).<sup>118</sup> Elsewhere, Poprishchin makes his desire for Sophie more explicit, saying he wishes he could access her boudoir: “I’d like to peek into her bedroom... there, I think, there are wonders; there, I think, there is paradise. . . . aie! aie! never mind, never mind. . . . silence” (*Khotelos’ by zaglianut’ v spal’niu. . . tam-to, ia dumaiu, chudesna, tam-to, ia dumaiu, rai. . . ai! ai! ai! nichego, nichego, molchanie*).<sup>119</sup> Ending his statements of desire for Sophie with calls for his own “silence” about the matter, Poprishchin displays a characteristic tendency to voice and then censure his ambition.

Similarly, Poprishchin speaks of his ambition to rise in the Table of Ranks in such a way that his goal appears to be at once plausible and illegitimate. At one point, he quotes his section chief, who chastised him for daring to think he might be a suitable beau for Sophie: “You’re dangling after the director’s daughter! Well, take a look at yourself, only think, what are you? You’re a zero, nothing more. You haven’t got a kopeck to your name” (*Ved’ ty volochish’sia za*

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<sup>117</sup> See, for instance, Stephen-Moeller Sally, “OOOO; or, The Sign of the Subject in Gogol’s Petersburg,” Monika Greenleaf and Stephen Moeller-Sally, eds., *Russian Subjects: Empire, Nation, and the Culture of the Golden Age* (Evanston, ILL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 325-346; Donald Fanger, *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 115-18.

<sup>118</sup> N[ikolai] [Vassil’evich] Gogol, “Zapiski sumasshedshego,” *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh* (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1977), 3:160; Nikolai Gogol, “The Diary of a Madman,” *The Collected Tales of Nikolai Gogol*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 1999), 282.

<sup>119</sup> Gogol, “Zapiski,” 163; Gogol, “The Diary,” 283.

*direktorskoiiu docher'iu! Nu, posmotri na sebja, podumai tol'ko, chto ty? ved' ty nul', bolee nichego. Ved' u tebia net ni grosha za dushoiu).*<sup>120</sup> Poprishchin then includes in his diary an answer he would like to give to the section chief as justification for his pursuit of Sophie, but this answer actually affirms the other man's view:

Я дворянин. Что ж, и я могу дослужиться. Мне еще сорок два года—время такое, в которое, по-настоящему, только что начинается служба. Погоди, приятель! будем и мы полковником, а может быть, если бог даст, то чем-нибудь и побольше. . . . Достатков нет—вот беда.<sup>121</sup>

I'm a nobleman. So I, too, can earn rank. I'm only forty-two—the age at which service just seriously begins. Wait, friend! we, too, will become a colonel and, God willing, maybe something even higher. . . . No income, that's the trouble.

Here, Poprishchin reveals his hope for advancement, yet also acknowledges the insurmountable obstacles to that advancement. Without money, he cannot live the lifestyle appropriate to those who might be promoted, but without getting promoted, he will never have that money. Although Poprishchin's ambition is very much alive, motivating him and driving the plot of “The Diary of a Madman,” it is also shown to be unreachable, even delusional, from the very start.

Aside from the title of the story, the earliest and clearest evidence that Poprishchin's ambition is in fact a form of madness, and that the narrative journey it propels will not lead to ambition's realization, comes near the beginning when Poprishchin's belief that dogs can speak and write Russian leads him to follow one around town. Poprishchin's encounter with speaking and writing dogs reveals how complex Gogol's treatment of mad ambition is. The dogs in question belong to Sophie and her friend, and Poprishchin's interest in them stems from his wild idea that they can provide him clues as to how to get close to Sophie. In particular, he believes they are carrying on an epistolary correspondence, and he hopes to obtain their letters. In a line that was cut by the censors in the 1835 *Arabesques* text of “Diary” but was restored according to the manuscript by later editors,<sup>122</sup> Poprishchin voices his initial unwillingness to believe that dogs can write:

Я еще в жизни не слыхивал, чтобы собака могла писать. Правильно писать может только дворянин. Оно, конечно, некоторые и купчики-конторщики и даже крепостной народ дописывает иногда; но их писание большею частью механическое: ни запятых, ни точек, ни слога.

Never yet in my life have I heard of a dog being able to write. Only a gentleman can write correctly. Of course, there are sometimes merchants' clerks and even certain serfs who can write a bit; but their writing is mostly mechanical—no commas, no periods, no style.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Gogol', “Zapiski,” 161; Gogol, “The Diary,” 283.

<sup>121</sup> Gogol', “Zapiski,” 161; Gogol, “The Diary,” 283.

<sup>122</sup> My discussion of the censorship of Gogol's story is informed by Laurie Ashch's article on this subject: “The Censorship of Nikolai Gogol's ‘Diary of a Madman,’” *Russian Literature Triquarterly* 14 (Winter 1976): 20-35.

<sup>123</sup> Gogol', “Zapiski,” 159; Gogol, “The Diary,” 281.

On one hand, this passage presents Poprishchin's thought process as comically delusional: it shows him conflating the biological difference between humans and dogs and the social distinction between nobles and non-nobles, and reveals his own mechanical reduction of style to punctuation: "no commas, no periods." On the other hand, the passage threatens the nobility's monopoly on culture by suggesting that style, like literacy, can be learned. What attitude, then, do Gogol's words convey? Do they mock the ambitious madman, the Russian social hierarchy, or both?

Although the censors did strike this passage as an implicit attack on the nobility, they permitted several far more seditious sections of the story to be printed, as when Poprishchin learns that Sophie is to marry a *kammerjunker*, leading him to question the legitimacy of the Table of Ranks:

Что ж из того, что он камер-юнкер. Ведь это больше ничего, кроме достоинство; не какая-нибудь вещь видимая, которую бы можно взять в руки. Ведь через то, что камер-юнкер, не прибавится третий глаз на лбу. Ведь у него же нос не из золота сделан, а так же, как и у меня, как и у всякого; ведь он им нюхает, а не ест, чихает, а не кашляет. Я несколько раз уже хотел добраться, отчего происходят все эти разности. Отчего я титулярный советник и с какой стати я титулярный советник? Может быть, я какой-нибудь граф или генерал, а только так кажусь титулярным советником? Может быть, я сам не знаю, кто я таков.

So what if he's a *kammerjunker*. It's nothing more than a dignity; it's not anything visible that you can take in your hands. He's not going to have a third eye on his forehead because he's a *kammerjunker*. His nose isn't made of gold, it's the same as mine or anybody else's; he doesn't eat with it, he smells; he doesn't cough, he sneezes. Several times already I've tried to figure out where all these differences come from. What makes me a titular councillor, and why on earth am I a titular councillor? Maybe I'm some sort of count or general and only seem to be a titular councillor? Maybe I myself don't know who I am.<sup>124</sup>

Such a bold questioning of the social order during an era of strict government censorship was only possible when couched in pathology. By this point in the story, Poprishchin has already revealed his insanity by expressing his belief that dogs can speak and write. Moreover, the incoherence of his ideas is further apparent in the way he mistakes social classifications for inherent properties even as he objects to their being treated as such: countering his own argument that rank is superficial rather than innate, he also thinks he might unknowingly—and inherently—be a count or general. Not only do challenges to the existing social order appear to symptoms of madness, Poprishchin also neutralizes his own critique of the social order by desiring his own advancement even as he attacks rank.

Undercutting Poprishchin's critique of social stratification by exposing his irrational desire for promotion, Gogol was able to incorporate material from a comedy he began but abandoned in 1833 due to its seditious content: *The Order of St. Vladimir, Third Class (Vladimir tret'ei stepeni)*.<sup>125</sup> From the fragments that remain of this comedy and accounts by Gogol's

<sup>124</sup> Gogol, "Zapiski," 168; Gogol, "The Diary," 292.

<sup>125</sup> Gippius, *Gogol*, 89-90; *Gogol*, 77.

contemporaries, it is clear that *The Order of St. Vladimir* would have been a work in the mad ambition tradition.<sup>126</sup> It tells of a high-ranking civil servant who so fervently desires to receive the “order” mentioned in the title that he finally loses his mind, imagining that he himself *is* that very order.<sup>127</sup> In a letter to Pogodin in February of 1833, Gogol writes that he is utterly engrossed in—even a little mad about—this comedy, but that he has already abandoned it because it could never be passed by the censors:

[Я] помешался на комедии. . . . “Владимир 3-ей степени”—и сколько злости, смеха и соли!.. Но вдруг остановился, увидевши, что перо так и толкается об такие места, которые цензура ни за что не пропустит.

I’ve lost my head over a comedy. . . . *The Order of St. Vladimir, Third Class*—and how much malice, laughter and piquancy!.. But suddenly I stopped, seeing that my pen was hitting up against such places as the censors would in no way allow.<sup>128</sup>

Indeed, the strict censorship of the time—evidenced by the many cuts made to the text of “The Diary of a Madman”—would not likely have permitted publication of a work suggesting that pathological ambition, rather than patriotic sentiment and self-sacrifice, might be motivating the service of high-ranking members of society.

Although Poprishchin has the modest rank of titular councilor, Gogol’s story does include a high-ranking man who dreams of receiving a decoration, an echo of the principal character from *The Order of St. Vladimir*. This figure is Poprishchin’s director and Sophie’s father. When Poprishchin intercepts the letters of Sophie’s dog, Medji, he learns that the director is waiting impatiently for a decoration:

[О]чень странный человек. Он больше молчит. Говорит очень редко; но неделю назад беспрестанно говорил сам с собою: “Получу или не получу?” Возьмет в одну руку бумажку, другую сложит пустую и говорит: “Получу или не получу?” Один раз он обратился и ко мне с вопросом: “Как ты думаешь, Меджи получу или не получу?” Я ровно ничего не могла понять, понюхала его сапог и ушла прочь. Потом, ма сhère, через неделю папá пришел в большой радости. Все утро ходили к нему господа в мундирах и с чем-то поздравляли. За столом он был так весел, как я еще никогда не видала, отпускал анекдоты, а после обеда поднял меня к своей шее и сказал: ‘А посмотри, Меджи, что это такое.’ Я увидела какую-то ленточку. Я нюхала ее, но решительно не нашла никакого аромата; наконец потихоньку лизнула: соленое немного. Гм! Эта собачонка, мне кажется, уже слишком... чтобы ее не высекли! А! так он честолобец! Это нужно взять к сведению.

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<sup>126</sup> Gogol reworked parts of his abandoned comedy and published them as independent scenes in 1842: “An Official’s Morning” (“Utro delovogo cheloveka”), “A Lawsuit” (“Tiazhba”), “The Servant’s Quarters” (“Lakeiskaia”) and “Scenes from Society Life” (“Steny iz svetskoi zhizni”). Gippius, *Gogol*, 89-90; *Gogol*, 78.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Commentary. *Sobranie khudozhestvennykh proizvedenii v piati tomakh* (Moskva: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1951-52), 4:463.

[A] very strange man. He's silent most of the time. Speaks very rarely; but a week ago, he talked to himself constantly: 'Will I get it or won't I?' He would take a piece of paper in one hand, close the other empty one, and say: 'Will I get it or won't I?' Once he addressed the question to me: 'What do you think, Medji? Will I get it or won't I?' I could understand none of it, so I sniffed his boot and went away. Then, *ma chère*, a week later Papà came home very happy. All morning gentlemen in uniforms kept coming to him, congratulating him for something. At the table he was merrier than I'd ever seen him before, told jokes, and after dinner he held me up to his neck and said: "Look, Medji, what's this?" I saw some little ribbon. I sniffed it but found decidedly no aroma; finally I licked it on the sly: it was a bit salty. Hm! This little dog seems to me to be much too... she ought to be whipped! Ah! So he's ambitious. That must be taken into consideration.<sup>129</sup>

Poprishchin's response here reveals the contradictions inherent in his understanding of ambition. His rejection of Medji's remarks as inappropriate to her low station suggests his commitment to the status quo.<sup>130</sup> While Poprishchin identifies his director as "ambitious" (*on chestoliubets*), he also suggests that his ambition "must be taken into account." Here Poprishchin alludes to his own ambitious plot to use the director and Sophie to elevate himself in society. Unlike the stories "The Mad Man of Ambition," "Madhouse at Charenton," and "Three Pages from the Madhouse," which neatly distinguish between ambition and sanity, Gogol makes it impossible to separate the ambitious from the unambitious and the judgment of ambition from ambition itself.

In another excursus on the desire for social elevation, Poprishchin offers a pseudo-clinical explanation of the cause of pathological ambition that parodies Bulgarin's doctor-narrator's assessment of the disorder in "Three Pages":

Все это честолюбие, и честолюбие оттого, что под язычком находится маленький пузырек и в нем небольшой червячок величиною с булавоочную головку, и это все делает какой-то цирюльник, который живет в Гороховой.

It's all ambition, and ambition is caused by a little blister under the tongue with a little worm in it the size of a pinhead, and it's all the doing of some barber who lives in Gorokhovaya Street.<sup>131</sup>

Poprishchin's absurd diagnosis echoes the image of the parasitic "worm" in "Three Pages." But whereas Bulgarin presents his narrator's etiology of mad ambition as a serious clinical discussion, Gogol presents the said diagnosis as a symptom of mad ambition itself.

Bulgarin's "Three Pages from a Madhouse" showed Gogol he could publish a story about ambition, and could even include some of the ideas from his abandoned comedy *The Order of St. Vladimir*, as long as he ascribed its manifestation—and any social critique it might entail—to a low-ranking and evidently insane character. It seems likely that Gogol's reading of Bulgarin's story and the contents of the *Northern Bee* for the year 1834 may have been at least partially

<sup>129</sup> Gogol, "Zapiski," 165-66; Gogol, "The Diary," 288.

<sup>130</sup> The association between dogs and matters of rank in the passage once again provoked the censors' discomfort: Gogol was made to strike the lines in which Medji is unimpressed with the smell and taste of the "ribbon." Ashch, "The Censorship of Nikolai Gogol's 'Diary of a Madman.'"

<sup>131</sup> Gogol, "Zapiski," 172; Gogol, "The Diary," 295-96.

responsible for his decision to alter his plan for “The Diary of a Madman”—the original title of which was to be “Notes of a Mad Musician” (“Zapiski sumasshedshego muzykanta”).<sup>132</sup> Shifting the focus of his story away from the theme of mad artistic genius found in the Hoffmannian tradition of *kunstlernovellen* popularized in Russia by Vladimir Odoevskii, Gogol composed “The Diary of a Madman” as if in response to “Three Pages” and *The Northern Bee*.

Gogol not only makes his borrowing from Bulgarin’s newspaper explicit, but also implicates that newspaper in Poprishchin’s descent into insanity. The hero is unable to clarify the pertinence of what he reads in “the papers” to his own life. For instance, although Poprishchin is initially alarmed to hear two dogs speaking Russian, he accepts this odd occurrence because he recalls reading about similar cases: “Actually, there have already been many such examples in the world. . . . I also read in the papers about two cows that came to a grocer’s and asked for a pound of tea” (*Deistvitel’no, na svete uzhe sluchilos’ mnozhestvo podobnykh primerov. . . . Ia chital tozhe v gazetakh o dvukh korovakh, kotorye prishli v lavku i sprosili sebe funt chaiu*).<sup>133</sup> Elsewhere, Poprishchin mentions *The Northern Bee* by name and alludes to the jumbled mixture therein of material about France and Russia:

Читал "Пчелку". Эка глупый народ французы! Ну, чего хотят они? Взял бы, ей-богу, их всех, да и перепорол розгами! Там же читал очень приятное изображение бала, описанное курским помещиком. Курские помещики хорошо пишут.

I read the little *Bee*. What fools these Frenchmen are! So, what is it they want? By God, I’d take the lot of them and give them a good birching! I also read a very pleasant portrayal of a ball there, described by a Kursk landowner. Kursk landowners are good writers.<sup>134</sup>

Here, Poprishchin demonstrates both the social conservatism and the middle-brow literary taste that make him an ideal reader of *The Northern Bee*, he attacks the democratizing French and deems Russian landowners from Kursk—certainly not a notable center of Russian literary production—to be good writers.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, by shifting rapidly from reflections on French desires (“So, what is it they want?”) to the literary achievements of Kursk, Poprishchin shows how newspapers like *The Northern Bee* could erase the imaginative borders between radically disparate spatial and historical contexts, opening the way for Russian readers to feel as though foreign news and literature might relate closely to their own lives.<sup>136</sup>

The imaginative leap that newspaper reading facilitates is precisely what leads to Poprishchin’s ambitious delusion that he is not a titular councilor but rather the king of Spain.<sup>137</sup> One morning, Poprishchin reads that Spain is without a king:

Я сегодня все утро читал газеты. Странные дела делаются в Испании. Я даже не мог хорошенько разобрать их. Пишут, что престол упразднен и что чины находятся в затруднительном положении о [sic] избрании наследника и оттого

<sup>132</sup> Commentary to “Zapiski sumasshedshego,” in Gogol’, *SS*, 3:297.

<sup>133</sup> Gogol’, “Zapiski,” 159; Gogol’, “The Diary,” 281.

<sup>134</sup> Gogol’, “Zapiski,” 160; Gogol’, “The Diary,” 282.

<sup>135</sup> On Poprishchin as an ideal reader of *The Northern Bee*, see Zolotusky, “The Diary of a Madman and the Severnaya Pchela”; Fanger, *Creation of Nikolai Gogol*, 115.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Zolotusky, 48.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

происходят возмущения. Мне кажется это чрезвычайно странным. Как же может быть престол упразднен? Говорят, какая-то донна должна взойти на престол. Не может взойти донна на престол. Никак не может. На престоле должен быть король. . . . Государство не может быть без короля. Король есть, да только он где-нибудь находится в неизвестности.

I spent the whole morning today reading the newspapers. There are strange doings in Spain. I couldn't even make them out properly. They write that the throne is vacant and that the officials are in a difficult position about the selection of an heir, which is causing disturbances. This seems terribly strange to me. How can a throne be vacant? They say some doña should ascend the throne. A doña cannot ascend the throne. Simply cannot. There should be a king on the throne. . . . A state cannot be without a king. There is a king, only he's somewhere unknown.<sup>138</sup>

Poprishchin's discussion of the succession crisis in Spain strongly suggests that he is reading *The Northern Bee*, which covered that story in the issues that included Bulgarin's "Three Pages from a Madhouse." While Poprishchin's belief in patrilineal lines of succession mirrors the conservative ideological orientation underlying Bulgarin's own writings, the madman's reaction to Spanish events highlights the essential instability of post-Napoleonic Europe that confronted readers of *The Northern Bee*.<sup>139</sup> In Gogol's "Diary," this particular news story leads Poprishchin to conclude that he too, could be a monarch.

Bombarded with foreign news and unable to distinguish between Europe and Russian places, times, and historical personages, Poprishchin conflates his readings with his own life. On a day he lists as "Year 2000 April 43<sup>rd</sup>" (*God 2000 apreliia 43 chisla*), Poprishchin places himself in a position analogous to the insurrectionary Carlos and writes: "This day—is a day of the greatest solemnity! Spain has a king. He has been found. I am that king" (*Segodniashnii den'—est' den' velichaishego torzhestva! V Ispanii est' korol'. On otyskalsia. Etot korol' ia*).<sup>140</sup> Here, Poprishchin's mental processes are shaped by the semi-official rhetoric of political reportage and the spatio-temporal logic of the newspaper, which brings together stories rooted in diverse places and times, uniting them in the space of the daily page.<sup>141</sup> The newspaper makes Poprishchin imagine he can be like a reporter who announces an official government celebration, like Carlos, who recently declared himself king of Spain, and like a European in the tradition of Napoleon, whose humble social position did not preclude a meteoric rise to power. Moreover, following the newspaper's example in presenting conflicting perspectives on ambition, Poprishchin thinks he can be all these things at once, even if they are at odds with one another: in his mind the principle of inherited power can be reconciled with its random usurpation.

As a Russian reader struggling to understand the "strange affairs" going on abroad, and at times conflating those affairs with his own, Poprishchin speaks not only for readers puzzled by the piecemeal importation of foreign news to Russia in the early nineteenth century, but for Russian literature itself in this period. The mad confusion about ambition in Poprishchin's mind points to the broader mixture of Russian and European literary and cultural models presented in the periodicals. Gogol makes productive use of this mixture, turning it into both the subject and

<sup>138</sup> Gogol, "Zapiski," 169; Gogol, "The Diary," 293.

<sup>139</sup> Zolotusky, 40-42.

<sup>140</sup> Gogol, "Zapiski," 170; Gogol, "The Diary," 294.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Zolotusky, 39.

the substance of his story. He simultaneously borrows the central theme of Bulgarin's "Three Pages," parodies the moralism of that work, mocks humbly-ranked clerks with ambition, critiques highly-ranked men for their ambition, questions the social order, and neutralizes that critique by presenting it as mad fantasy. The point here is not that "Diary" uses madness to obscure what is really a satirical condemnation of Bulgarin, ambition, or Russian society, but rather that Gogol highlights the plurality of Russian and foreign discourses on ambition, discourses that not only contradicted one another, but which were in some cases as internally inconsistent as Gogol's own story.

One of the most striking things about Gogol's dialogic treatment of ambition in "The Diary of a Madman" is that he achieves that treatment in an ostensibly monologic form: a first-person narration. With the exception of the story's title, Gogol, unlike Bulgarin, does not frame Poprishchin's diary with any sane man's speech, depriving the reader of any external perspective. The presence of dissonant voices speaking in unison gives the "Diary" its peculiarly ambivalent tone, leaving readers unsure as to how they are meant to feel about Poprishchin and his ambition. Even as Poprishchin's outrageous delusions invite readers to laugh at him, his first-person account delivers a critique of rigid social hierarchies that cannot easily be laughed away. Because Gogol does not grant narrative authority to anyone other than Poprishchin, the questions the hero poses about the legitimacy of the Table of Ranks ("Why do they make all these distinctions?" and "Why am I a titular councillor?") are left open. Furthermore, once Poprishchin has completely lost his mind, imagining that the mental institution where he has been locked up is the Spanish court, the harsh physical treatment he receives for his ambition (beatings and cold baths) and the despair he expresses make this comic story increasingly unsettling.<sup>142</sup>

In the final paragraph, Gogol presents readers with an image that aptly conveys the ambivalent tone of his text and the difficulty readers face in interpreting the ambition it represents. Crying out desperately to be freed from the asylum and then imagining that he has actually escaped, Poprishchin speaks of the terrain he believes he is covering in a speeding troika:

Вон небо клубится передо мною; звездочка сверкает вдали; лес несется с темными деревьями и месяцем; сизый туман стелется под ногами; струна звенит в тумане; с одной стороны море, с другой Италия; вон и русские избы виднеют. Дом ли то мой синее вдали?

Here is the sky billowing before me; a little star shines in the distance; a forest races by with dark trees and a crescent moon; blue mist spreads under my feet; a string twangs in the mist; on one side the sea, on the other Italy; and there I see some Russian huts. Is that my house blue in the distance?<sup>143</sup>

In the middle of this description of an expansive, imaginary landscape, the image of a "string" that "twangs in the mist" is a reminder of Gogol's original plan to make "The Diary of a Madman" the story of a mad musician. In a sense, Poprishchin remains an artist even in the published version of the story: as an ambitious madman, he is an artist of the self.

Poprishchin does not play a musical instrument, but rather uses European social classifications to recompose himself as a Spanish king instead of a Russian titular councilor.

<sup>142</sup> Gogol, "Zapiski," 175; Gogol, "The Diary," 299.

<sup>143</sup> Gogol, "Zapiski," 176; Gogol, "The Diary," 300.

Moreover, he uses European geographic designations (Italy) to recompose his surroundings and his relation to them, giving free reign to the ambitions that have been so resolutely blocked in St. Petersburg. Seeking a place for himself somewhere between Europe and Russia, however, Poprishchin cannot tell if he has found one: “Is that my house?” he asks. Similarly twanging questions remain for readers: What is ambition’s rightful place—inside or outside of the asylum, in Europe or in Russia? Where might a Russian ambition plot lead? And how should one feel about an ambitious re-composition of the self? While the answers are typically swathed in a strange Gogolian “mist,” by returning in *Dead Souls* to the final image of the ambitious hero speeding away in a troika, Gogol shows that he himself would continue to ponder and be inspired by such questions for years to come.

### Conclusion

This chapter has traced the history of ambition words and concepts in Russia and France and the importation of the French discourse on mad ambition to Russia, and it has offered several potential explanations for why ambition appears so strangely out of place in early nineteenth-century Russian literature. The rigidly hierarchical structure of Russian society, and the absence in Russian of a word for ambition that legitimized the desire for upward social mobility, made it difficult for ambition to appear normal in Russian literature. As Russian authors such as Bulgarin and Gogol followed the French Romantic precedent of treating ambition as curious form of madness, the exotic quality of ambition in the Russian tales is enhanced by these authors’ grafting of a European form of madness onto a new social milieu. Bulgarin’s “Three Pages from a Madhouse” made ambition appear as an essential, yet ideologically suspect, part of life in St. Petersburg. The very generic, cultural, and ideological heterogeneity of the periodicals through which tales of European mad ambition were imported to Russia also shaped Gogol’s representation of ambition as an emotion both foreign and Russian, in and out of place, timely and anachronistic.

Demonstrating the inextricability of language, the emotions, and socio-economic structures, the genealogy of ambition and the narratives it engendered tell a story of transnational cultural exchange that is exemplary of the processes by which authors like Gogol turned the question of the relationship between Russia and Europe into the substance of Russian prose fiction. At a time when ambition came to be seen as the definitive emotion of post-Napoleonic Europe, the importation of French literary, emotional, and economic discourses impelled Russian writers to employ only partially equivalent native words (such as *chestoliubie*) or foreign borrowings (like *ambitsiia*) to approximate the debates about social organization and mobility found in French literature and the periodical press. Gogol’s “The Diary of a Madman”—like the works by Pushkin and Dostoevsky to be analyzed in the next chapter—show just how productive the uncertain relationship between Russian and European cultural concepts and conditions could be.

## Chapter 2

## Plot and Tone

It may in fact be a defining characteristic of the modern novel (as of bourgeois society) that it takes aspiration, getting ahead, seriously, rather than simply as the object of satire.

—Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 1984

Ambition has great narrative potential. It is inherently dynamic: it propels movement through both space and time, projecting a new and different future as a goal to be attained. Characteristic of the relatively weak who would become stronger, ambition entails tactics rather than strategies: moving through space they do not own or control, ambitious people count on time to bring the future they seek.<sup>144</sup> Yet ambition is not only a desire for a change in social position, it is also a feeling one has about oneself and one's present place in society. This is especially true in the case of the Russian concepts of *chestoliubie* and *ambitsiia*, as they are bound up in feelings of pride that can easily give way to embarrassment and shame. Continuing the partial history of ambition in nineteenth-century Russian literature begun in Chapter 1, this chapter examines ambition as a cause of narrative motion and a form of emotion experienced in the present moment.<sup>145</sup>

As Peter Brooks argues in *Reading for the Plot*, the form of ambition that serves as a primary motor of plot in the European novel is based on a bourgeois model of individual socio-economic advancement and accumulation.<sup>146</sup> Positing a likeness between the ambitious hero's desire for "possession and progress" and the desire that drives the reader toward the end of the plot in the hope of acquiring meaning, Brooks suggests that the hero and reader share a common set of bourgeois values. The acquisitive reader is invited to take the hero's ambition "seriously," presumably identifying with his desire for upward social mobility.<sup>147</sup> So what happens when the post-Napoleonic French plot of middle-class ambition is imported to post-Decembrist Russia? What sort of *non*-bourgeois plots does it propel, and where does it lead Russian characters and readers? Furthermore, what does ambition feel like to the Russian heroes who live it and to the readers who experience it vicariously? What is the relationship between the narrative motions and emotions ambition produces?

Gogol's "The Diary of a Madman" ("Zapiski sumasshedshego," 1835) is distinct from the texts I examine here in that it presents Poprishchin as an unequivocally insane character: his ambition gives rise to a delusion of political grandeur that is symptomatic of the French clinical and Romantic discourse on *monomanie ambitieuse*. In Alexander Pushkin's "The Queen of

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<sup>144</sup> On tactics and strategies, see Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), esp. 29-42.

<sup>145</sup> I was first inspired to consider the pairing of motion and emotion by Alyson Tapp's article, "Moving Stories: (E)motion and Narrative in Anna Karenina," *Russian Literature* 61, no. 3 (2007): 341-361.

<sup>146</sup> Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 39.

<sup>147</sup> Whereas Brooks focuses on the way ambition drives plots and readers toward the end, D. A. Miller sees in Balzac's novels of ambition—particularly *Lost Illusions*—an explicit refusal of closure. According to Miller, "the Balzacian novel, committed to processes of circulation and exchange, is incapable of coming to an end. . . it must mark its endings by the promise and necessity of further narration." D. A. Miller, "Balzac's Illusions Lost and Found," *Yale French Studies*, No. 67, "Concepts of Closure" (1984), 181.

Spades” (“Pikovaia dama,” 1834) and Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *The Double* (*Dvoynik*, 1846), by contrast, the heroes Hermann and Goliadkin are closer to Balzac’s and Stendhal’s bourgeois heroes in that their ambitions are economic and social rather than political, and might conceivably be realized. To be sure, Pushkin’s Hermann’s goes mad when his ambition is blocked, and Dostoevsky’s Goliadkin already shows signs of insanity in the opening pages of *The Double*; nevertheless, the wealth Hermann longs for and the bureaucratic and social elevation Goliadkin pursues are not in themselves dismissed as entirely irrational.

In the first half of this chapter, I compare Stendhal’s and Balzac’s representations of bourgeois ambition as a defining feature of post-Napoleonic French society to Pushkin’s and Dostoevsky’s fantastical rendering of the same problematic. Relying on Brooks’ notion of plot as the “design and intention of narrative... a structuring operation elicited by, and made necessary by, those meanings that develop through succession and time,” I focus on the divergent plots French and Russian ambitions structure.<sup>148</sup> As a secondary consideration, I briefly explore the distinct *tones* of these French and Russian narratives. Whereas in I. A. Richards’ classic formulation, tone consists of the speaker’s “attitude to the listener,” what I mean by tone is closer to Valentin Voloshinov’s idea of “intonation” (*intonatsiia*), which consists of the speaker’s attitude toward the object of representation (in this case, ambition) no less than to the audience. Tone involves both the narrator’s assessment of ambition, and also how the reader is invited to assess it.<sup>149</sup>

The second half of the chapter thus moves from ambition’s role as a motor of plot to its emotional dynamic, asking not where ambition leads, but what it feels like along the way. Viewing ambition in “The Queen of Spades” in light of Pushkin’s interest in the passions and their physiological, social, and literary conditions of possibility, I examine the structural tension Pushkin sets up between boundless passions and stylistic restraint, highlighting a poetics of “trembling” that manifests this tension. Considering ambition in *The Double* as exemplary of Dostoevsky’s investigation of the social and situational roots of the emotions, I focus on the embarrassment ambition produces. Of particular concern to me is the embodiment of this feeling in movements, gestures, and speech. If in “The Queen of Spades,” ambition is an uncontrollable passion that causes trembling, in *The Double*, it is an embarrassment that causes abortive movements, awkward smiles, and stuttering. In order to understand how ambitious movements such as these feel to readers, I rely in this section on Siane Ngai’s recent elaboration of tone as the “feeling-tone” that pervades a text from start to finish.<sup>150</sup>

### Typical Ambition: Stendhal and Balzac

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<sup>148</sup> Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 12.

<sup>149</sup> On Richards’ idea of tone, see I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), 182; For Voloshinov, “[I]ntonation is oriented in *two directions*: with respect to the listener as ally or witness and with respect to the object of utterance as the third, living participant; intonation scolds or caresses, denigrates or magnifies it” ([И]нтонация ориентируется в двух направлениях: по отношению к слушателю как союзнику или свидетелю, и по отношению к предмету высказывания как к третьему живому участнику; интонация бранит его, ласкает, принижает или возвеличивает). V. N. Vološinov, “Discourse in life and discourse in art,” *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique*, trans. I. R. Titunik (New York: Academic Press, 1976), 104-05; V[alentin] Voloshinov, “Slovo v zhizni i slovo v poezii: K voprosam sotsiologicheskoi poetiki,” *Zvezda* no. 6 (1926), 255.

<sup>150</sup> Sianne Ngai, “Tone,” *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2005), 43.

Like the Romantic stories analyzed in Chapter 1, Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* (*Le Rouge et le noir*, 1830) and Balzac's *The Wild Ass's Skin* (*La Peau de chagrin*, 1831) and *Lost Illusions* (*Illusions perdues*, 1837-1843) depict ambition as uncontrollable and potentially fatal.<sup>151</sup> Frequently cited as works marking the transition from Romanticism to Realism, these novels bear traces of the Romantic discourse on ambition as an uncontrollable passion that devours its victims. For instance, in *The Red and the Black*, Stendhal speaks of the hero Julien Sorel's ambition as a "fire that was devouring him inwardly" (*feu qui dévorait son âme*).<sup>152</sup> In Balzac's *Lost Illusions*, Lucien de Rubempré tells his sister he has "boundless ambitions" (*des ambitions démesurées*), which act on him as a "deadly poison" (*élément funeste*).<sup>153</sup> Yet on the whole, these novels portray ambition as a normal and even essential means of navigating the political free-for-all of post-Napoleonic France. Rather than cordoning it off from readers in the confines of the mental hospital or exalting it as a form of Romantic alienation, they follow its movements through the domestic and urban spaces of nascent Realism. Registering a shift away from the older cultural understanding of the passions as universal, physiological phenomena, to the early Realist aesthetic project of explaining the individual psyche through contemporary social structures, Stendhal and Balzac suggest that it is a social imperative that renders ambition so volatile.

Stendhal's and Balzac's novels of ambition are *Bildungsromane*. Ambition propels their young heroes to maturity and educates them about social life.<sup>154</sup> A powerful example of ambition's role in character formation is the ending of *The Red and the Black*. Although Julien Sorel is incarcerated and ultimately beheaded as a consequence of his ambition, he displays remarkable courage, dignity and self-control as he marches to his execution:

Fortunately on the day set for his execution a bright sun was shining upon the earth, and Julien was in the vein of courage. . . . There now, things are going very well, he told himself, I shall have no lack of courage. Never had that head been so poetic as at the moment when it was about to fall. . . . Everything proceeded simply, decently, and without the slightest affectation on his part.<sup>155</sup>

Julien's ambition may lead him to the guillotine, but it also gives him the poise required to control his emotions even at the moment of death. That his head is more "poetic" than ever when

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<sup>151</sup> In *The Red and the Black* and *The Wild Ass's Skin*, the heroes die at the end. Although Lucien de Rubempré is still alive at the end of *Lost Illusions*, he does die in the novel that continues his story, *The Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans* (*Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, 1847).

<sup>152</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le noir, Oeuvres romanesques complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 371; Stendhal, *The Red and the Black*, trans. Robert M. Adams (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 26. Translation modified. On Stendhal's engagement with the French clinical treatment of ambition, see A. G. Altunian, "Politicheskie mneniia" *Faddeia Bulgarina: Ideino-stilisticheskii analiz zapisok F.V. Bulgarina K Nikolaiu* (Moskva: Izd-vo URAO, 1998).

<sup>153</sup> [Honoré de] Balzac, *Illusions perdues* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 698; Honoré de Balzac, *Lost Illusions*, trans. Kathleen Raine (New York: Random House, 2001), 645.

<sup>154</sup> According to D. A. Miller, Balzac uses cycles of ambition and disillusionment to form characters whose subjectivities are shaped by dominant economic features of the nineteenth-century social order, which "is not an order which values or even requires a fixed self, or the sense of an ending, but aspires—as the disillusioned Balzac is the first to admit—to the condition of money: to its lack of particularity, to the mobility of its exchange, to its infinitely removed finality."

<sup>155</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le noir*, 803-04; *The Red and the Black*, 417.

it falls suggests a measured restraint and harmonious wholeness that resists the dismemberment of his body.

Julien's self-control survives even his death. Passing swiftly over the execution scene, Stendhal goes on to detail the arrangements Julien made before dying. Instructing his friend Fouqué about where he is to be buried, Julien displays linguistic and emotional composure:

I should like to rest, since rest is the word, in that little cave atop the big mountain that overlooks Verrières. I've told you several times how I spent the night in that cave and looked out over the richest provinces of France, my heart was afire with ambition: that was my passion in those days.... Well, that cave is precious to me, and nobody can deny that it's located in a spot that a philosopher's heart might envy....<sup>156</sup>

Julien's ability to speak calmly of his own death demonstrates his emotional control. He cherishes the memories of his ambition and wishes to remain always in the place where he felt it most strongly. After his death, when his friend and lover carry out his wishes, gathering his severed parts back together and laying them in the cave, Julien achieves a kind of symbolic vindication: he not only turns the cave into a kind of monument to his own ambition, but also determines that his place will forever be high above the "richest provinces of France," on a mountain that "overlooks" (*domine*) Verrières.

Stendhal and Balzac present their novels of education as stories about the development of a new, "young" France. In *Lost Illusions*, Balzac's narrator claims that ambition is such an important feature of the younger generation that he could not select anyone other than a man of ambition as a hero:

Society today, by throwing open the same banquet to all her children, arouses their ambitions in the very morning of life. She deprives youth of its graces, and vitiates most of its generous sentiments by an admixture of calculation. Poetry would have it otherwise; but fact too often gives the lie to the fiction in which we would like to believe; we cannot allow ourselves to represent youth otherwise than as it is in the nineteenth century.<sup>157</sup>

Balzac's narrator explicitly historicizes his creative vision, regarding ambition as an essential sign of the times. Accordingly, the narrator finds ambition everywhere. The ambitious hero, Lucien de Rubempré, hopes to become a famous poet and obtain a letter of nobility, but to do so he must navigate the whole "inextricable network of conflicting ambitions" (*inextricable lacis d'ambitions*), elsewhere termed the "world of contending ambitions" (*monde d'ambitions*), in the professional sphere of journalism.<sup>158</sup> His friend Lousteau tries to dissuade him from seeking fame, telling him he is but one of countless ambitious youths vying for the same goal:

It is the same story, year after year—the same eager rush to Paris of ambitious young fellows from the provinces, who arrive—more of them every year—their heads erect, their hearts full of high hopes, to take Fashion by storm.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 804; *The Red and the Black*, 417. Translation modified.

<sup>157</sup> Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 67; *Lost Illusions*, 61.

<sup>158</sup> Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 502, 522; *Lost Illusions*, 454, 473.

<sup>159</sup> Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 346; *Lost Illusions*, 253.

Ultimately, Lucien fails to achieve his goals not because he is untalented, stymied by society, or insane, but because he is in competition with too many other people with too many ambitions of their own.<sup>160</sup>

Stendhal's and Balzac's novels are rooted in contemporary French history. Their heroes' movements closely mirror the migration of large numbers of French citizens to the capital, the rise and fall of successive regimes after the Revolution, and the rise of the bourgeoisie. Even *The Wild Ass's Skin*, with all its fantastical elements, owes much to the heated political debates and power-grabbing characteristic of post-Napoleonic France.<sup>161</sup> As the critic Richard Terdiman notes, Balzac's novels of ambition reveal the bourgeoisie's navigation of new social codes at a time when its "economic emergence within a social context still dominated by the cultural forms and codes of Ancien Régime France represented an unprecedented and perplexing social fact."<sup>162</sup> In Terdiman's view, ambition in Balzac's novels is a fundamentally semiotic enterprise: it is "ambition to penetrate the sign system, to inhabit it as known territory and manipulate it freely from a secure position at its heart."<sup>163</sup> Ambition not only spurs heroes to acquire signs of value such as money, professional titles, or fine clothes, but also drives them to understand the ways in which semiotic structures determine social life. Like the authors who created them, Stendhal's and Balzac's ambitious characters attempt to read and interpret society as a text. At the end of *The Red and the Black*, Julien declares: "I have been ambitious, but I have no intention of blaming myself for that; I was acting in those days according to the code of the times" (*les convenances du temps*).<sup>164</sup> At the end of *Lost Illusions*, Vautrin instructs Lucien that when it comes to the "code of ambition" (*le code de l'ambition*), one has "no choice... one must accept

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<sup>160</sup> In Stendhal's and Balzac's novels, even women are ambitious. For instance, in *Lost Illusions*, Lucien's first lover, Mme. Bargeton, pursues her own social success by getting close to a woman more powerful and ambitious than she is: "She had recognized in Mme d'Espard the secret power of the ambitious *grande dame*, and she had decided that her own success could be achieved by making herself the satellite of this star." It is because Mme. Bargeton is ambitious that she proves useful to Lucien: she takes him from the provinces to Paris because she herself wishes to go. This points to a broader tendency in Stendhal's and Balzac's novels of ambition: young male protagonists typically enter into or at least pursue romantic relationships with women of higher social standing who either help them to rise in society or are at least capable of doing so. Thus, ambition is a desire at once social and erotic. In *Lost Illusions*, Balzac sums up the interconnectedness of ambition and erotic desire when Lucien experiences ambition and love for Mme. de Bargeton at once: "He loved, but he also wanted to rise (*L'ambition se mêlait à son amour*), a double desire natural enough in any young man who has a heart to satisfy and poverty to combat." In some of Balzac's novels, ambition also leads to male protagonists' erotic relations with men, most famously in cases where the character Vautrin teaches ambitious youths like Lucien in *Lost Illusions* and Rastignac in *Pere Goriot* about subaltern paths to social success. Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 182, 175; *Lost Illusions*, 174, 60-61; Michael Lucey, *The Misfit of the Family: Balzac and the Social forms of Sexuality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>161</sup> For instance, when the hero Raphael narrates his life story to his friends over dinner, he says his father purchased foreign property that Napoleon had bestowed on his generals, only to lose that property during the Restoration. Describing the lawsuit his father filed as a result, and citing specific dates (1814-1816) during which the properties generated revenue that the family later fought to retain, Raphael situates his story of fantastic exchange during the period of reallocation of properties in post-Napoleonic Europe. [Honoré de] Balzac, *La Peau de chagrin, La Comédie humaine, Études Philosophiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 126; Honoré de Balzac, *The Wild Ass's Skin*, trans. Herbert J. Hunt (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 97.

<sup>162</sup> Richard Terdiman, "Structures of Initiation: On Semiotic Education and its Contradictions in Balzac," *Yale French Studies*, no. 67, "The Pedagogical Imperative" (1983): 201.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>164</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le noir*, 803; *The Red and the Black*, 416.

the code.”<sup>165</sup> If ambition had initially made the social conditioning of the emotions apparent to early French psychiatry, Stendhal’s and Balzac’s novels transform ambition into a social semiotics legible to authors and characters alike.

The gradual normalization of ambition in European bourgeois society may well explain the tonal shift in French ambition narratives from the comic to the “serious.”<sup>166</sup> The narrators of these novels do not speak as though instructing unknowing readers about the dangers of an exotic passional imbalance, but as though sharing observations about contemporary society that are worthy of serious attention precisely for their widespread applicability to the world in which readers are presumed to live. This change in narrative tone is doubtless due to the literary-historical shift from Romanticism to Realism, from the exotic and the extraordinary to the typical and the ordinary. Yet it also reflects and contributes to a significant transformation in cultural attitudes toward ambition in post-Napoleonic France. The peculiarity of Pushkin’s and Dostoevsky’s Russian ambition narratives derives from their manipulation of the social and literary codes proposed by Stendhal and Balzac in the very different world of contemporary France.

### **Ambition’s Ghosts: “The Queen of Spades” and *The Double***

Unlike Stendhal and Balzac, Pushkin and Dostoevsky present their ambitious heroes as eccentric, marginal figures, atypical of contemporary society.<sup>167</sup> Indeed, the ambition that drives the plots of “The Queen of Spades” and *The Double* appears detached from—and even disruptive of—time and space. As central texts of the so-called “Petersburg myth,” “The Queen of Spades” and *The Double* consolidated the image of the capital as a fantastic space haunted by ghosts or peopled by obsessive heroes who wander circuitously rather than moving directly or purposefully from place to place.<sup>168</sup> By combining Stendhal’s and Balzac’s French narratives of ambition with the German genre of the fantastic tale, Pushkin and Dostoevsky disrupt the epistemological foundations on which nascent French Realism would appear to rest: namely, the belief that the boundaries between the rational and irrational, the natural and the supernatural, could be known.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, by abstracting a historically grounded plot from its native context,

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<sup>165</sup> Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 704; *Lost Illusions*, 666. Translation modified.

<sup>166</sup> See the epigraph to this chapter. Prior to the nineteenth century, ambition narratives frequently had a comic tone. One comic treatment of ambition that was particularly well known in Russia in the early nineteenth-century is Molière’s, *The Bourgeois Gentleman* (*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, 1670).

<sup>167</sup> “The Queen of Spades” was first published in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* in March of 1834. Pushkin is believed to have written it in the fall of 1833 at Boldino. Paul Debreczeny, *The Other Pushkin: A Study of Alexander Pushkin’s Prose Fiction* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1983), 186.

<sup>168</sup> Other texts in the tradition of the “Petersburg myth” that feature wandering heroes and specters of the past include Pushkin’s “The Bronze Horseman” (“Mednyi vsadnik,” 1834), Gogol’s “Nevsky Prospect” (“Nevskii Prospekt,” 1835) and “The Overcoat” (“Shinel’,” 1842), Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (*Prestuplenie i nakazanie*, 1866), and Andrei Bely’s *Petersburg* (*Peterburg*, 1913, revised 1922). Broadly speaking, each of these texts is about some form of ambition, suggesting that ambition struck Russian authors as particularly apt to produce fantastic narratives, on the one hand, and that ambition (mad, fantastic, frustrated, or otherwise) might be fruitfully explored as one of the essential elements of the Petersburg myth, on the other. In *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, Marshall Berman does note the centrality of the theme of the individual’s frustrated attempts at self-determination to the Petersburg myth, but he does not focus on ambition per se or the Russian borrowing of it from European literature, as I do. See Berman, *All that is Solid*, especially pp. 181-216.

<sup>169</sup> The fantastic tale was popularized in Russia by Hoffmann and Russian writer’s influence by him. On this subject, see Neil Cornwell, ed., *The Gothic-Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature* (Amsterdam:

they blur the distinctions between the present and the past and between the Russian and the European.

Pushkin's Hermann is a multiply marginal character. He is introduced as an officer who watches on the sidelines as his noble friends gamble. His friends understand his refusal to participate in the game as the result of his foreign heritage: "Hermann is a German: he's thrifty, that's all" (*German nemets: on raschetliv, vot i vse*), says Tomskii.<sup>170</sup> Pushkin characterizes Hermann as essentially German, too, giving him a name that in Russian is spelled "Germann." Like Tomskii, the narrator associates Hermann's German heritage with his "thrift":

Германн был сын обрусевшего немца, оставившего ему маленький капитал. Будучи твердо убежден в необходимости упрочить свою независимость, Германн не касался и процентов, жил одним жалованьем, не позволял себе малейшей прихоти.

Hermann was the son of a Russified German, who had left him a little capital. Firmly resolved to ensure his independence, Hermann did not touch even the interest earned by these funds; he lived on his salary alone, denying himself even the slightest extravagance.<sup>171</sup>

Hermann appears as a figure both Russian and foreign. While his desire to accumulate enough money so as to secure his independence demonstrates both thrift and ambition, his part-German heritage makes his middle-class aspirations appear somewhat alien to St. Petersburg.<sup>172</sup>

Ambition propels the hero to move in a non-linear fashion through time and space. Initially, ambition causes him to exercise restraint—he works, saves, and waits for a better future. But when he hears that his friend Tomskii's grandmother, the old Countess N., knows the magic secret of how to win the card game faro, Hermann decides to try to obtain the secret from her, and his previous practice of prudent saving gives way to another method of achieving his ambitions: gambling. These two methods of ambition—saving and gambling—have opposing relationships to time: the former depends on time and waits for it, using it to amass what is desired; the latter compresses time, cramming huge stakes into instants, multiplying or canceling hopes with incredible speed. When saving, time pays: the more time passes, the more is saved. The gambler, on the other hand, must continually pay for time: after the end of the game, the gambler pays to play another time. If the saver longs for the future, the gambler is addicted to the present moment of possibility. Furthermore, whereas saving orients time linearly, gambling structures it as an endless series of cycles. The cyclical nature of time in "The Queen of Spades" can be seen most clearly in the way the story is organized around a series of card games: the initial game at Narumov's house is followed by the three games Hermann plays at Chekalinskii's, and all of these games echo those played by the countess in Paris, as described by

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Rodopi, 1999); A. B Botnikova, *E.T.A. Gofman i russkaia literatura: Pervaia polovina XIX veka: K probleme russko-nemetskikh literaturnykh svyazei* (Voronezh: Izd-vo Voronezhskogo universiteta, 1977); Norman W. Ingham, *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Reception in Russia* (Würzburg: Jal-Verlag, 1974); Charles E. Passage, *The Russian Hoffmannists* (The Hague: Mouton, 1963).

<sup>170</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 227; "The Queen of Spades," 211.

<sup>171</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 235; "The Queen of Spades," 218.

<sup>172</sup> Hermann's desire for independence invites further investigation in connection with Pushkin's own unwelcome dependence on his parents and the Emperor. On Pushkin's desire for noble independence, see Leslie O'Bell, "Pushkin, Aristocratic Identity and Court Society," *Pushkin Review*, vol. 3 (2000), 23-42.

her grandson Tomskii. The shift from a culture of thrift to one of gambling produces the cyclical temporal structure of “The Queen of Spades.”

In addition to structuring time, Hermann’s ambition drives his circuitous movements through space. For instance, Tomskii’s “anecdote” about the countess’ secret knowledge of how to win at cards precipitates Hermann’s new obsession, which he ponders as he goes wandering through Petersburg:

Анекдот о трех картах сильно подействовал на его воображение, и целую ночь не выходил из его головы. —Что, если, думал он на другой день вечером, бродя по Петербургу: что, если старая графиня откроет мне свою тайну! . . . .  
Рассуждая таким образом, очутился он в одной из главных улиц Петербурга, перед домом старинной архитектуры.

The anecdote about the three cards fired his imagination; he could not get it out of his head all night. “What if,” he thought as he wandered about Petersburg the following evening, “what if the old Countess revealed her secret to me?” . . . .  
Lost thus in thought, he found himself on one of the main streets of Petersburg, in front of an old-style house.<sup>173</sup>

Overall Pushkin’s story is haunted by an uncertainty about the causal relations that determine movement through time and space. In contrast to the purposeful movement through space typical of Stendhal’s and Balzac’s heroes, Hermann’s ambition propels seemingly accidental movement.<sup>174</sup> Nor does Pushkin’s narrator give readers any clue as to whether Hermann “found himself” in front of the countess’ house by chance, fate, or supernatural design; instead, he reports what could be either his own or Hermann’s view of the subject: “A mysterious force, it seemed, had drawn him there” (*Nevedomaia sila, kazalos’, privlekala ego k nemu*).<sup>175</sup> Moreover, whereas ambition is a passion generally oriented toward the future, in “The Queen of Spades” it leads the hero into Russia’s eighteenth-century past, as represented by the aging countess.

Like Pushkin’s story, Tomskii’s anecdote itself moves between France and Russia: it begins with a description of the countess living and accruing gambling debts in Versailles in the 1770s, and then details her meeting with the legendary occultist Saint-Germain, who supposedly told her which three cards she should play to pay off her latest debt. The action of this hypodiegetic narrative then shifts back to Russia, where the countess shares the secret of the three cards with a young man (Chaplitskii), who also used it to win at faro. In this way, the anecdote posits an intimate relationship of exchange, of both wealth and cultural practices, between the Russian and French aristocracy in the late eighteenth century, and suggests that what works or makes sense in France can be successfully implemented in Russia, despite geographical

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<sup>173</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 236; “The Queen of Spades,” 219.

<sup>174</sup> According to Iurii Lotman, “The Queen of Spades” demonstrates the association—common in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Russia—of the accumulation of wealth with chance, rather than with work and savings. Iurii Lotman, “Tema kart i kartochnoi igry nachala XIX-ogo veka,” *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* 7, no. 365 (1975): 126-29; Jurij M. Lotman, “Theme and Plot: The Theme of Cards and the Card Game in Russian Literature of the Nineteenth Century,” trans. C. R. Pike, *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature*, no. 3 (1978): 464-67.

<sup>175</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 236; “The Queen of Spades,” 219.

and other differences.<sup>176</sup> Hermann will seek to follow in the countess' footsteps by acquiring her occult secret to success in gambling.

The pervasive narrative interest in physical and cultural movement between France and Russia mirror the metaliterary exchange between French and Russian literature found in the story. In a general sense, "The Queen of Spades" is informed by the French Romantic and clinical discourse on mad ambition elaborated in Chapter 1.<sup>177</sup> Yet beyond the cultural conception of overweening ambition as a mental disorder, Pushkin's story has little in common with those stories. Of far clearer importance to "The Queen of Spades" is Balzac's novel *The Wild Ass's Skin*.<sup>178</sup> In his 1929 study *Rasskazy o Pushkine (Stories about Pushkin)*, Nikolai Lerner identifies Balzac's tale as one of the most important sources of "The Queen of Spades," and he identifies several parallels between Pushkin's and Balzac's characters and plots.<sup>179</sup> Confined to one small page, Lerner's comparison of "The Queen of Spades" and *The Wild Ass's Skin* serves as an invitation to further analysis.<sup>180</sup>

Responding to Balzac's representation of ambition as a fantastic gamble, Pushkin not only tries his hand at Balzac's narrative game, but also tells a story about Franco-Russian literary exchange. In using words such as "respond," "game," and "exchange" to characterize Pushkin's relationship to Balzac, I intentionally refrain from suggesting that Pushkin somehow "rejects" or attempts to "correct" Balzac's articulation of ambition.<sup>181</sup> Instead, I wish to convey that "The

<sup>176</sup> I use "aristocracy" and related words loosely to indicate members of the high nobility. These words are not intended to point to a precise legal or social category of persons.

In Russia, aristocracy generally referred to the life of the court, while gentry or nobility referred to the estate as a whole, irrespective of whether its members participated in court life.

<sup>177</sup> The 1826 issue of *The Moscow Telegraph (Moskovskii telegraf)* that contains the anonymous story "A Mad Man of Ambition" ("Sumasshedshii chestoliubets"), which purports to be a translation from French, also includes a piece called "Count Saint-Germain" ("Graf Senzhermen"). Because Pushkin is known to have read and even contributed to *The Moscow Telegraph* in the 1820s, and because the journal's combination of a piece on an ambitious madman and a piece on Saint-Germain in one issue anticipates Pushkin's own combination of such figures in "The Queen of Spades," it seems plausible that Pushkin may have read "A Mad Man of Ambition." On Pushkin's contributions to *The Moscow Telegraph*, see Rzakiewicz, "N. A. Polevoi's *Moscow Telegraph*."

<sup>178</sup> Pushkin's lifelong fascination with, and careful study of, French language, literature and culture is well documented, but to date no one has conducted a rigorous investigation of his relationship to Balzac or his transformation of *The Wild Ass's Skin* in "The Queen of Spades." In his classic study *Pushkin i Frantsiia*, the Russian literary scholar Boris Tomashevskii notes that Pushkin included *The Wild Ass's Skin* in a list of works he was intending to review in 1832—the year before he wrote "The Queen of Spades." In addition to this one, Tomashevskii cites three other instances in which Pushkin refers to Balzac directly or is presumed to be referring to him: In an 1832 letter to E. M. Khitrovo, Pushkin briefly refers to the "preciousness of your Balzac" (*marivaudage de Votre Balzac*). Elsewhere, discussing the writer Pavlov in an 1836 review, Pushkin mentions the "near-sighted pettiness of French novelists" (*blizorukaia melochnost' frantsuskikh romanistov*), and many scholars have interpreted this comment as a reference to Balzac. In another brief comment, Pushkin states that the French writers Balzac and Janin are not as influential for Russian novelists as Scott and LeSage. Not much can be extrapolated from these cursory comments than that he was evidently thinking about Balzac in the early 1830s and most likely read *The Wild Ass's Skin*. Tomashevskii, *Pushkin i Frantsiia*, 165-69.

<sup>179</sup> Nikolai Lerner, "Istoriia 'Pikovoi damy,'" in *Rasskazy o Pushkine* (n.p.: Priboi, 1929), 142.

<sup>180</sup> In an article of 1966, the literary critic Richard Gregg takes up the question of Pushkin's engagement with *The Wild Ass's Skin* where Lerner leaves off, emphasizing the parallels between the female characters in each work. Yet again, Gregg's treatment is just a few pages long, and it raises but does not answer the question of what Pushkin is actually doing with *The Wild Ass's Skin* in "The Queen of Spades." Richard A. Gregg, "Balzac and the Women in The Queen of Spades," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 10, no. 3 (Autumn 1966): 279-82.

<sup>181</sup> Viewing Pushkin's relationship to Balzac in terms of exchange, I follow the lead of Tomashevskii, who argues that although Pushkin was actively engaged in the formation of a national literature, his goal was not

Queen of Spades” forms part of the international European literary conversation about ambition that was particularly lively in the 1830s-1840s. One of the most interesting aspects of Pushkin’s response to Balzac—turning a potentially one-sided encounter into a playful literary exchange—is his appropriation of the figure of the Russian Countess Foedora from *The Wild Ass’s Skin*. While Lerner points out the basic parallels between Balzac’s and Pushkin’s countesses, he does not consider the implications of Foedora’s Russianness. In fact, Pushkin’s transformation of the alluring young *Foedora* into the wretched old Anna *Fedotovna* N. shows that he was especially interested in the role Russia plays in Balzac’s representation of contemporary French ambition. Pushkin not only offers a Russian version of a French ambition plot, he reworks a French plot that appropriates Russianness for its own narrative aims.

*The Wild Ass’s Skin*, like “The Queen of Spades,” is about an ambitious young man whose irrational tendencies win out over his rational ones, and who turns to gambling and magic, with disastrous consequences. In *The Wild Ass’s Skin*, the hero Raphael anticipates Pushkin’s Hermann in that he inherits a small amount of capital from his father and resolves to live frugally upon it as he works to secure his fortune.<sup>182</sup> By chance, he befriends a man of higher social position, Rastignac, who resembles Hermann’s friend Tomskii by giving the hero the idea to rise in society more quickly by winning the heart of a rich and enigmatic Russian countess. A young woman about 22 years old, Balzac’s Countess Foedora is described as the leading “lady of fashion” (*la femme à la mode*) in Paris.<sup>183</sup> A sense of mystery surrounds her: Rastignac calls her “a kind of feminine enigma: a half-Russian Parisian, a half-Parisian Russian” (*[e]spèce de problème féminin, une Parisienne à moitié Russe, une Russe à moitié Parisienne*) and “the most beautiful, the most entrancing woman in Paris!”<sup>184</sup> It is unclear why exactly Foedora has come to Paris, whether she is or was married, and, if so, to whom. Rumors circulate that she married well but that the Czar did not recognize the union.<sup>185</sup> Interestingly, the uncertainty of Foedora’s past and parentage, the rumors that call into question the legitimacy of her claim to belong to the upper echelons of society, and the fact that she is Russian rather than French do not keep Raphael from viewing her as the “symbol of all [his] desires” and the image of “Society” itself.<sup>186</sup> Indeed, it is precisely Foedora’s sense of mystery that make her an apt representative of the elusive social world Raphael would like to join. Foedora is for Raphael both the object and the instrument of his desires: he hopes that if he can win her love, she will help him rise in the society that she herself represents.

Hermann similarly becomes entranced by the enigmatic Russian Countess Anna Fedotovna N., who once lived in Paris, where she “was extremely fashionable” (*byla tam v bol’shoi mode*).<sup>187</sup> Because, according to her grandson Tomskii, the countess possesses the secret of how to win at faro, she is at the center of all the story’s mystery and intrigue. Hermann hopes that by winning her affection, he will persuade her to reveal her gambling secret to him, enabling him to win a fortune. For both Balzac’s and Pushkin’s heroes, the Russian countesses represent the receding aristocratic social world of the Ancien Régime and offer the possibility of rapid social advancement. As many critics have pointed out, Pushkin’s countess represents the court

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nationalistic but rather “a practice of international literary exchange” (*praktika mezhdunarodnogo obmena v literature*). Tomashevskii, 171.

<sup>182</sup> Balzac, *La Peau de chagrin*, 127-28, 133; *The Wild Ass’s Skin*, 98-99, 105.

<sup>183</sup> Balzac, *La Peau de chagrin*, 145; *The Wild Ass’s Skin*, 119.

<sup>184</sup> Balzac, *La Peau de chagrin*, 146; *The Wild Ass’s Skin*, 120. Translation modified.

<sup>185</sup> Balzac, *La Peau de chagrin*, 147; *The Wild Ass’s Skin*, 121.

<sup>186</sup> Balzac, *La Peau de chagrin*, 146, 194; *The Wild Ass’s Skin*, 120, 285.

<sup>187</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 228; “The Queen of Spades,” 212, translation modified.

society of the Catherinian era. She strictly maintains the behavioral norms of the 1770s: “The Countess. . . strictly followed the fashions of the 1770’s, spending just as much time on, and paying just as much attention to, her toilette as she had sixty years before” (*Grafinia... sokhraniata vse privyehki svoei molodosti, strogo sledovala modam semidesiatykh godov, i odevalas’ tak zhe dolgo, tak zhe staratel’no, kak i shest’desiat let tomu nazad*).<sup>188</sup> Somewhat paradoxically, in both *The Wild Ass’s Skin* and “The Queen of Spades,” young men with a decidedly bourgeois aim—upward social mobility—see in female representatives of aristocratic culture the keys to their success. Foedora and Anna Fedotovna are embodiments of outmoded socio-economic structures, and yet they are called upon to help Raphael and Hermann succeed in a newer, radically different social order.

Writing soon after the Restoration Monarchy had been overthrown and replaced by the more democratic July Monarchy, it is perhaps unsurprising that Balzac found in a Russian the most appropriate representative of Ancien Régime culture, vestiges of which were still powerful elements of social life in France. As the nation which had blocked Napoleon’s ambitions, and as a place where feudal social hierarchies analogous to those formally abolished in France by the Revolution were still in place, Russia represented a force that thwarted ambition and a world still governed by the outdated social codes of the Ancien Régime.<sup>189</sup> As for Pushkin’s countess in “The Queen of Spades,” contemporary readers recognized in her the figure of a real Russian woman—the aging Princess Nataliia Petrovna Golitsyna—and Pushkin did not deny the connection.<sup>190</sup> Pushkin’s countess should be considered in relation her Balzacian prototype. Replacing Balzac’s representation of the Ancien Régime as a beautiful young Russian countess with an older, moribund representative of the Catherinian era, Pushkin orients his ambition plot simultaneously toward contemporary French literature and late eighteenth-century Russian history.

The convergence of French and Russian literature and history in “The Queen of Spades” can be seen most vividly in Pushkin’s rewriting of the scene from *The Wild Ass’s Skin* in which Raphael sneaks into Foedora’s bedroom and spies on her in order to gain privileged knowledge that might help him win her love. This scene so closely resembles Hermann’s invasion of the countess’ bedroom in “The Queen of Spades” that it is worth quoting both scenes at length for the sake of comparison. In the following passage Raphael recounts how he hides in Foedora’s room during a party at her house, watching as she comes in and undresses:

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<sup>188</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 231; “The Queen of Spades,” 214, translation modified. From among the existing critical appraisals of the countess as a representative of the Catherinian era, of particular interest to me is Luba Golburt’s discussion of how the “men and women of the eighteenth century . . . continued to haunt” writers like Pushkin in the nineteenth century, and her idea that “The Queen of Spades” “diagnoses the pathology of the man of the 1830s taken hostage by a historicist imagination.” Luba Golburt, “Catherine’s Retinue: Old Age, Fashion, and Historicism in the Nineteenth Century,” *Slavic Review* 68, no. 4 (2009): 782, 796; on the countess and the Catherinian era, see also Andrew Wachtel, “Rereading ‘The Queen of Spades,’” *Pushkin Review*, no. 3 (2000): 13-21.

<sup>189</sup> It is tempting to think that Balzac’s personal interest in Russia—later evidenced by his lengthy epistolary romance with and eventual marriage to Eveline Hanska, a Polish woman living in the Russian Empire, and by his visits to St. Petersburg in 1843 and to Hanska’s estate in present-day Ukraine in 1847 and 1848-49—may also underlie the allure he attributes to Foedora in *The Wild Ass’s Skin*. It is worth noting, however, that Balzac only entered into correspondence with Hanska after she read his novel and wrote to him about it, reportedly chastising him for his negative representation of women. Graham Robb, *Balzac: A Life* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 223-25, 403, 353-4, 381, 395.

<sup>190</sup> Lerner, 146-47; N. Rabkina, “Istoricheskii prototip ‘Pikovoi damy,’” *Voprosy literatury* 43, no. 1 (1968), 213-16.

She tugged at a bell rope, and the sound of the bell rang through the apartments. She entered her bedroom humming a phrase of the *Pria che spunti*. . . . but once she stopped singing her expression changed, her mouth drooped and every feature betrayed fatigue. She had dropped the mask; her role as actress was ended. And yet the ravage wrought on her beauty by her artistic exertions, or by the weariness of the hostess, was not without its charm. "There's the real woman!" I said to myself. . . . She rang again, and her chambermaid hurried in. Where was her room? I had no idea. She came in by a secret staircase. . . . "You rang, madam?" "Twice!" Foedora replied. "Are you going deaf?" . . . Justine unlaced her. I watched her with curiosity as the last veil was removed. . . . Through her chemise her pink and white body gleamed. . . . Certainly there was no imperfection to make her dread the furtive glances of love. . . . [T]he maid departed. The Countess turned over several times. She was disturbed in mind and she sighed. . . . Seen thus, she was ravishing. She had one arm flung over her head, like a child; her pretty face, in repose, with a fringe of lace around it, expressed a sweetness that set my heart on fire.<sup>191</sup>

Balzac's depiction of Foedora's house and her relations with those who serve her anticipates Pushkin's in several respects. The bell rope Foedora pulls to summon her chambermaid has its counterpart in the bell Pushkin's countess rings at one point to summon her servants.<sup>192</sup> Justine's entrance is matched by that of several maids who come in to the old Countess' room when Hermann is hiding in it. Foedora's impatient question, "Are you going deaf?" is echoed in "The Queen of Spades" when the countess asks her ward, Lizaveta Ivanovna, a similar question: "What's the matter with you, child? Are you deaf?" (*Chto ty, mat' moia! glukha, chto-li?*).<sup>193</sup> The hidden staircase through which Justine enters Foedora's room corresponds to the winding staircase to Lizaveta's room and the hidden staircase by which Hermann exits the old countess' house.<sup>194</sup>

Entering a space reminiscent of Foedora's house with a mission that recalls Raphael's, Hermann retraces the French hero's footsteps. Planning to appeal to the old countess to reveal to him the secret of her social success, Hermann enters the old countess' bedroom while she is at a party and watches her undress once she returns:<sup>195</sup>

В спальню вбежали три старые горничные, и графиня, чуть живая, вошла и опустила в вольтеровы кресла. Германн глядел в щелку: Лизавета Ивановна прошла мимо его. Германн услышал ее торопливые шаги по ступеням ее лестницы. . . . Графиня стала раздеваться перед зеркалом. Откололи с нее чепец, украшенный розами; сняли напудренный парик с ее седой и плотно остриженной головы. . . . Германн был свидетелем отвратительных таинств ее туалета; наконец графиня осталась в спальней кофте и ночном чепце: в этом наряде, более свойственном ее старости, она казалась менее ужасна и безобразна.

<sup>191</sup> Balzac, *La Peau de Chagrin*, 182-84; *The Wild Ass's Skin*, 160-63.

<sup>192</sup> Actually, it is not clear whether the countess rings a bell or pulls a bell rope; the narrator states only that she "started ringing with all her might" (*nachala zvonit' izo vsei mochi*). Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 233; "The Queen of Spades," 216.

<sup>193</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 232; "The Queen of Spades," 216.

<sup>194</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 240, 245; "The Queen of Spades," 223, 227-28.

<sup>195</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 235; "The Queen of Spades," 219.

Как и все старые люди вообще, графиня страдала бессонницею. Раздевшись, она села у окна в вольтеровы кресла и отослала горничных. . . . Графиня сидела вся желтая, шевеля отвислыми губами, качаясь направо и налево. В мутных глазах ее изображалось совершенное отсутствие мысли; смотря на нее, можно было бы подумать, что качание страшной старухи происходило не от ее воли, но по действию скрытого гальванизма.

Вдруг это мертвое лицо изменилось неизъяснимо. Губы перестали шевелиться, глаза оживились: перед графинею стоял незнакомый мужчина.

Three old chambermaids ran into the bedroom, and the Countess, barely alive, came in and sank into a Voltairian armchair. Hermann watched through a crack in the door: Lizaveta Ivanovna passed by him. He could hear her hasty steps up her staircase. . . . The Countess began to undress in front of the mirror. The maids unpinned her bonnet bedecked with roses and removed the powdered wig from her closely cropped gray head. Pins came showering off her. . . . Hermann became privy to the loathsome mysteries of her dress. At last she put on her bed jacket and nightcap: in these clothes, more appropriate for her age, she seemed to be less frightening and hideous.

Like most old people, the Countess suffered from insomnia. Having undressed, she sat in the Voltairian armchair by the window and dismissed the chambermaids. . . . The Countess sat, all yellow, mumbling with her flabby lips and swaying right and left. Her dim eyes were completely empty of thought; looking at her, one might assume that the swaying of this horrifying old woman was caused, not by her own will, but by the action of a hidden galvanism.

Suddenly an inexpressible change came over her lifeless face. Her lips stopped mumbling, and her eyes lit up: a strange man stood before her.<sup>196</sup>

Like Balzac's countess, Pushkin's is a woman whose social compartment is linked to her anachronistic character. Just as Foedora plays the part of an ideal—but outmoded—society woman, whose dual status as a Russian and a representative of the Ancien Régime sets her apart culturally and temporally from bourgeois figures like Raphael, Anna Fedotovna remains committed to playing the part of a beautiful socialite from the Catherinian era, and appears out of place in 1830s Petersburg.<sup>197</sup> When Foedora stops singing, it is as though she steps out of the social role she plays before others. When she shows her fatigue and suddenly looks older, Raphael feels he is seeing “the real woman” who has “dropped her mask.” Nevertheless, Raphael does not learn the secrets he seeks—he is captivated by Foedora, but does not find a way to win her love or convince her to help him rise in society. She falls asleep in front of him, untouched; the Ancien Régime culture she represents remains closed to him. Similarly, as Pushkin's countess undresses, she drops her mask of youth and contemporaneity, and is made visible as the relic she truly is. But this is the only one of her secrets Hermann becomes privy to at this time:

<sup>196</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 240-41; “The Queen of Spades,” 223-24.

<sup>197</sup> Unlike Foedora, Pushkin's countess is no longer able to give convincing performances—at social functions, people typically pay her the minimum amount of respect due to an old woman of her social position, and then ignore her; Hermann is unique in seeking her attention and affection. Interestingly, however, everyone around the old countess is involved in the feigned perpetuation of her social currency. Her family members even withhold from her the news of the deaths of her coevals so as to avoid making her feel old. Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 233, 231; “The Queen of Spades,” 217, 214-15.

the countess is so horrified to find Hermann in her bedroom that she dies without telling him how to win at faro or clarifying whether she knows.

Hermann's infiltration of the old countess' house can be read for its metaliterary implications. We might think of Pushkin as a Hermann or a Raphael, sneaking into Balzac's textual boudoir and studying it, evaluating its aesthetic characteristics and seeking something to use, play with or transform for his own purposes. The similarities between the houses of the two countesses—with their hidden passageways and staircases—suggests an architectural model of intertextuality. Making use of the secret ins and outs of Balzac's story, Pushkin constructs a new textual edifice and links it back to France. Like the lived spaces represented in "The Queen of Spades," Pushkin's text is permeated by French literary and cultural paradigms. Balzac's ambition plot is unique in that one of its foundational elements is a French idea of Russia. Thus, this intertextual encounter is a rare instance of French and Russian texts reaching out to each another, converging in a Franco-Russian narrative space that is shaped by the movements of ambition.

Propelling Hermann's movement through the old countess' house, ambition also leads Hermann through multiple temporalities. For instance, when Hermann leaves by way of the hidden staircase, he imagines he is repeating the action of the countess' former lover, Chaplitskii:

По этой самой лестнице, думал он, может быть лет шестьдесят назад, в эту самую спальню, в такой же час. . . прокрадывался молодой счастливец, давно уже истлевший в могиле, а сердце престарелой его любовницы сегодня перестало биться. . .

"Perhaps," he thought, "up this very staircase, about sixty years ago, into this same bedroom, at this same hour. . . there stole a lucky young man, now long since turned to dust in his grave; and the heart of his aged mistress has stopped beating today. . ."<sup>198</sup>

Here, Hermann repeats the movements of an ambitious young Russian from the eighteenth century even as he repeats the movements of Balzac's hero, Raphael. In this way, Pushkin redirects the movements of Balzac's contemporary French ambition plot back toward the Russian past.<sup>199</sup>

Pushkin's redirection of Balzac's plot is nowhere more apparent than in his transformation of Balzac's youthful Foedora into the ghastly old Anna Fedotovna. Whereas Foedora is a beautiful woman whose body "set [Raphael's] heart on fire," Pushkin's countess is hideously ugly and "barely alive." Foedora's body is "pink and white," while the old countess' is "all yellow." Foedora sighs, then sleeps "like a child," while the old countess mumbles, suffering from the insomnia "like most old people." If for Raphael, there is no separation between ambition and erotic desire, for Hermann, erotic desire is but an instrument he would use to achieve his ambition.<sup>200</sup> He not only feigns love for the young ward Lizaveta in order to gain

<sup>198</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 245; "The Queen of Spades," 228.

<sup>199</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 245; "The Queen of Spades," 227-28.

<sup>200</sup> The fact that Hermann's desire is not really for the countess herself, but rather for the wealth she might help him secure, points to one of the features that distinguish Pushkin's, Gogol's, and Dostoevsky's tales from Balzac's and Stendhal's novels of ambition: in the Russian tales, erotic desire plays a relatively minor role; there are no consummated love affairs, and few ambitious women whose desires might motivate them to help their lovers rise in society. While in *The Wild Ass's Skin*, Foedora does not actually help Raphael, his desire for her is inseparable from his ambition. In Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, a novel Pushkin read enthusiastically in the early 1830s, the

access to the countess' house, he prepares to become the countess' lover if it will help him learn her secret.<sup>201</sup>

Почему ж не попробовать своего счастья? . . . Представиться ей, подбиться в ее милость, —пожалуй, сделаться ее любовником, —но на это всё требуется время— а ей восемьдесят семь лет, —она может умереть через неделю, —через два дня!

Why not try my luck? . . . I could be introduced to her, get into her good graces, become her lover if need be; but all this requires time, and she is eighty-seven: she may die in a week—in a couple of days!<sup>202</sup>

Seeking his fortune at the hands of a representative of the Catherinian era, Hermann travels along Balzac's French narrative path at the same time that he follows the lead of the young Russian men who sought rank and fortune as favorites of Russia's eighteenth-century empresses. The word "*milost'*," which can also signify court favor, hints at the already outdated social model that underlies Hermann's ploy to seduce the countess.

The most infamous female practitioner of favoritism, Catherine II granted huge sums of money and prestigious titles to her male lovers, providing the means for ambitious young men of humble origin to rise in society.<sup>203</sup> Notably, Pushkin refers to one of Catherine's favorites early

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protagonist Julien's female lovers, Mme. de Rênal and Mathilde (the daughter of the Marquis de la Mole), are instrumental to his attempted rise in society, and both of these women have ambitions of their own that motivate them to help him. In Gogol's "The Diary of a Madman" and Dostoevsky's *The Double*, by contrast, the protagonists prove completely unable to communicate with, let alone become the lovers, of the young ladies they desire, and those ladies are minor characters whose desires are in no way represented. In "The Queen of Spades," the scene in which Hermann chooses the door to the countess' room rather than the staircase to Lizaveta's shows that unlike his French counterparts, he must decide between ambition and romance: "[O]n the right there was a door leading into the study; on the left, another to the hallway. Hermann opened it, saw a narrow, winding staircase that led to the room of the poor ward. . . . But he turned around and entered the dark study" (*[S]prava nakhodilas' dver', vedushchaia v kabinet; sleva, drugaia v koridor. Germann ee otvoril, uvidel uzkuu, vituu lestnitsu, kotoraiia vela v komnatu bednoi vospitannitsy... No on vorotilsia i voshel v temnyi kabinet*). The woman who actually invites Hermann into her bedroom is but a poor ward of the *grande dame* that might help him achieve his goals, and the latter is too old for the part he would have her play. Robert Louis Jackson, "Napoleon in Russian Literature," *Yale French Studies*, No. 26 (1960): 108; Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le noir*, 437; *The Red and the Black*, 84; Gogol, "Zapiski sumasshedshego," 160; "The Diary of a Madman," 282; Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972), 1:133-4; Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Double, The Double and the Gambler*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larisa Volokhonsky (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 37; Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 240; "The Queen of Spades," 223.

<sup>201</sup> Hermann's strategy for gaining access to the countess' home—wooing her ward with love letters he copies from a book—offers another example of Pushkin's practice of borrowing elements from French ambition plots in which Russians figure as representatives of outmoded French cultural paradigms: the hero of Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, Julien, wins the heart of Mathilde de la Mole by using a similar epistolary strategy, and it is Julien's Russian acquaintance, Prince Korasoff, who suggests that he do so. Instructing Julien on how to behave like a nobleman and how to seduce women, Korasoff lends Julien a set of lover letters and tells him to copy them out and send them to another woman in order to make Mathilde jealous. Stendhal's narrator notes that this tactic is in fact an old French one that has fallen out of use, and he explains the Russian's suggestion to use it in terms of Russian cultural belatedness: "The Russians copy French customs, but always at a distance of fifty years. They are just now coming into the age of Louis XV" Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le noir*, 703; *The Red and the Black*, 325.

<sup>202</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 235; "The Queen of Spades," 219.

<sup>203</sup> Isabel de Madariaga, "Favouritism," *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 343-358; J. T. Alexander, "Favourites, Favouritism and Female Rule in Russia, 1725-1796," in

in “The Queen of Spades,” when Tomskii says that the countess’ former lover Chaplitskii “once in his youth lost 300,000 to Zorich” (*odnazhdy v molodosti svoei proigral—pomnitsia Zorichu—okolo trekh sot tysyach*).<sup>204</sup> S. G. Zorich was a favorite of Catherine in the late 1770s.<sup>205</sup> Thus, as Hermann attempts to follow Chaplitskii’s example in learning the countess’ secret, he is drawn into a network of textual associations with Catherinian favoritism, a native Russian cultural model of upward social mobility that Hermann hopes might still be operative. That the countess is so old and fragile she dies of fright indicates how anachronistic this model is in early nineteenth-century Russia, however. Considering that the countess may only live a short while longer (“she may die in a week—in a couple of days!”), Hermann highlights ambition’s need for time, which is exactly what Pushkin’s story does not afford him. The countess’ old age keeps Hermann’s seduction plot from being a viable option: she dies during their first encounter.<sup>206</sup>

It is as though Pushkin must reach back in time—to the era of female rule—to find a Russian equivalent for the French ambition plot that uses a powerful Russian woman to help a young man succeed. Russian women’s relatively weak social position in the 1830s, however, makes the idea of a powerful woman (like Anna Fedotovna in her youth, when she had the personal autonomy to gamble, slap her husband, and shut him out of her bedroom) appear outmoded.<sup>207</sup> Just as the days of female rule in Russia began and ended in the eighteenth century, the countess no longer has the social power she once had, and she is too old to become Hermann’s lover or to help him succeed. As a figure oriented toward the past rather than the future, she is ill suited to aid the movements of ambition. Although later in the story the dead countess does appear to Hermann as a ghost, telling him the three cards to play in order to win his fortune at faro, he ultimately fails to play the correct sequence of cards, and loses both his savings and his mind.<sup>208</sup> The countess’ ghostly appearance to Hermann casts a spectral light both on the new French ambition plot and the old Russian cultural model of court favoritism, suggesting the immateriality of these means of social elevation in contemporary Petersburg.

“The Queen of Spades” is a story of two generations of Franco-Russian cultural exchange. The Catherinian era to which the countess belongs saw the apogee of the state-sponsored Russian project of emulating French culture, and when French enthusiasm for Russians in France was also strong.<sup>209</sup> Indeed, this period might be considered the moment of greatest proximity between Russian and French elites, before the Revolution would set the two states on radically different historical trajectories—with the French course providing greater freedom for the movements of bourgeois ambition, and the Russian course leading to tighter social controls and heightened suspicion about the potentially pernicious influence of French political models. Tomskii’s anecdote about the countess’ success at the French court during the 1770s is thus in keeping with the general trends in Franco-Russian cultural relations at that time. Her encounter with the occultist highlights the central importance of French culture to the higher Russian nobility under the Francophile policies of Empress Catherine.

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*Russia in the Age of the Enlightenment: Essays for Isabel de Madariaga* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 106-24.

<sup>204</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 229; “The Queen of Spades,” 213.

<sup>205</sup> Debreczeny, Notes to “The Queen of Spades,” in *Alexander Pushkin: Complete Prose*, 517, note 14.

<sup>206</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 242; “The Queen of Spades,” 225.

<sup>207</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 228; “The Queen of Spades,” 211.

<sup>208</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 247, 252; “The Queen of Spades,” 229-30, 233.

<sup>209</sup> Dimitri Sergius Von Mohrenschildt, *Russia in the Intellectual Life of Eighteenth-Century France* (New York: Columbia university press, 1936).

The second Franco-Russian cultural exchange depicted in “The Queen of Spades” occurs between the hero Hermann and his author Pushkin. Although Hermann’s attempt to resuscitate the countess’ secret proves a failure, the 1830s saw the continued appropriation and transformation of contemporary French literary paradigms by Russian writers, and Pushkin’s story is one of the most successful examples of this exchange. Pushkin’s redirection of Balzac’s contemporary French plot to eighteenth-century Russian history makes “The Queen of Spades” a tale that moves endlessly between present and past French and Russian literary and cultural models. Using ambition to propel circular movements through multicultural, multi-epochal space and time, Pushkin keeps readers coming back to his story time and again, compulsively playing its game in the hopes of acquiring its secrets.

If in “The Queen of Spades,” ambition shapes time cyclically according to the logic of gambling, in Dostoevsky’s *The Double*, ambition causes a bifurcation of time—according to the logic of the Doppelgänger. Like Gogol’s Poprishchin, Dostoevsky’s Goliadkin is a titular councilor who desires promotion in the civil service and a relationship with the daughter of his patron. It is, however, impossible to locate a succinct or direct statement of the hero’s ambition: Goliadkin’s aims and frustrations are tangled in a web of rumors and allusions, and Dostoevsky makes them known only indirectly and obscurely. For instance, during his first conversation with his doctor, Krestyan Ivanovich, Goliadkin refers to himself in the third person, claiming to speak about one of his “close acquaintances” as he reveals his disappointment at being passed over for promotion at work:

Да-с, один из моих близких знакомых поздравил с чином, с получением асессорского чина, другого весьма близкого тоже знакомого, и вдобавок приятеля, как говорится, сладчайшего друга. Этак к слову пришлось. «Чувствительно, дескать, говорят, рад случаю принести вам, Владимир Семенович, мое поздравление, искреннее мое поздравление в получении чина.»

Yes sir, one of my close acquaintances congratulated another on his rank, his receiving the rank of assessor, this other was also a very close acquaintance, and a friend on top of that, as they say, a sweet friend. And so the words came out. “I am, that is, he said, I am most feelingly glad to offer you, Vladimir Semenovich, my congratulations, my sincere congratulations on your new rank.”<sup>210</sup>

From the rest of this conversation, the reader can infer that Goliadkin is the one who “congratulated” Vladimir Semenovich, the nephew of Goliadkin’s director at work, and that the hero feels his age and his long record of service make him more deserving of the promotion the other man received. Aggravating this offense, Vladimir Semenovich has also edged Goliadkin out of the competition for his wealthy benefactor’s daughter, Klara Olsufyevna. It is clear, then, that Goliadkin’s “congratulations” were intended as a sarcastic insult to a more successful rival. In speaking of his rival’s promotion the way he does, Goliadkin disavows his own frustrated ambition, projecting it outward onto a fictitious “acquaintance.”

Both Goliadkin’s ambition to rise up, which involves the imaginary projection of a new and different future self, and his denial of that ambition, which involves his attempt to distance himself from that which he is, are implicated in the appearance of the double—Goliadkin’s less

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<sup>210</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 120; *The Double*, 17.

abashedly—and more successfully—ambitious alter-ego. The displacement of Goliadkin’s ambition onto his double produces two simultaneous storylines—one of Goliadkin’s ruin, and the other of his double’s social success: whereas the double supplants Goliadkin at work and becomes a favorite of His Excellency, by the end of the novel Goliadkin has lost his job, his servant, and even his home. Thus, Dostoevsky represents ambition as shadowy, elusive, and typically elsewhere and at another time: it has either already been blocked, as in the case of Goliadkin, already met with success, as in the case of Vladimir Semenovich, or is operative and ongoing in a disavowed alter-ego, as in the case of the double.

This displacement of ambition onto other times and other characters propels frenetic, abortive, zig-zag movements around Petersburg.<sup>211</sup> In the first part of the novel, Goliadkin’s roundabout journey to the ball at Olsufy Ivanovich’s dramatizes his desire to rise to a higher social position, and the blockage of this ambition produces an erratic, multidirectional plot. For instance, when Goliadkin reaches Olsufy Ivanovich’s house, he walks up the stairs, is refused entrance by the servant, walks back down, then back up a moment later, and back down after the door has been shut in his face. In general, the many scenes of Goliadkin ascending, descending, or crouching in staircases are all fraught with anxiety, figuring as they do the hero’s frustrated attempts to rise in society. After the double appears and begins his own rise to higher social standing, Goliadkin’s movements grow increasingly frantic as he chases this phantom representative of the ideal of upward social mobility around the capital. On the one hand, it is as though Goliadkin’s zig-zag and circular movements *around* Petersburg compensate for the blockage of the *vertical* social advancement of his would-be ambition plot. On the other hand, we might read Goliadkin as a metaliterary figure representing not only the narrative strivings of *The Double*, but of Russian literature in the 1840s, a time when authors like Dostoevsky are relying on, in a sense chasing after, elusive French literary models that might help them set the Russian prose tradition in motion.

As the inheritor of the newly flourishing tradition of Russian prose, however, Dostoevsky followed native—as well as European—literary precedents in shaping his tale of mad ambition. Chief among the widely recognized sources of *The Double* are Gogol’s “The Diary of a Madman” and *Dead Souls*.<sup>212</sup> If the central theme of mad ambition, and the social setting of the Petersburg bureaucracy, make the connection between *The Double* and “The Diary of a Madman” apparent, one of the most important points in common between Dostoevsky’s work and *Dead Souls* is the unceasing movement the heroes’ ambitions produce in each text. The various carriages and taxis Goliadkin hires throughout *The Double* are urban versions of the serf-driven troika that famously conveys Chichikov throughout the vast Russian countryside in the picaresque novel *Dead Souls*. In addition to Gogol’s ambition narratives, which are themselves

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<sup>211</sup> Vinogradov discusses the speed, continual interruption, and uncertain purpose of Goliadkin’s movements, but he does not mention ambition’s role in propelling them. V[iktor] V[ladimirovich] Vinogradov, “Evoliutsiia russkogo naturalizma,” *Poetika russkoi literatury. Izbrannye trudy* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo “Nauka,” 1976), 109-16.

<sup>212</sup> In both the original and revised subtitles of this work—*The Adventures of Mr. Goliadkin* (*Pokhozhdeniia gospodina Goliadkina*) and *A Petersburg Poem* (*Peterburgskaia poema*), respectively—Dostoevsky alludes to *Dead Souls*. The full title of Gogol’s work as it appeared in the first printing was *The Adventures of Chichikov: Dead Souls: A Poem* (*Pokhozhdeniia Chichikova: Mertvye dushi: Poema*). Other important sources of *The Double* include minor works in the Russian Hoffmanist and Natural School traditions. See Vinogradov, “Evoliutsiia russkogo naturalizma,” and the commentary to *Dvoinik* in Dostoevskii, *PSS*, 1.

Russian reworkings of European literary models of ambition, I would suggest that Balzac's *Lost Illusions* is an important intertext for *The Double*.<sup>213</sup>

In *Lost Illusions*, Balzac's papery world of Parisian journalism and financial markets is a capitalist industrial counterpoint to Dostoevsky's papery world of hand-copying in the Petersburg bureaucracy.<sup>214</sup> If in *Lost Illusions*, Lucien de Rubempré must acquire the social codes of salon society in order to succeed professionally as a writer, in *The Double*, Goliadkin's desire for professional advancement similarly motivates his attempts to follow the social codes of high society. Dostoevsky's careful observation of Goliadkin's clothing as he gets dressed at the beginning of the novel recalls similar scenes in *Lost Illusions*, when Lucien tries to make himself presentable.<sup>215</sup> The carriages Goliadkin hires and the social as well as economic capital they represent recall the carriages Lucien pays for—often with his last money—in order to promenade through the streets of Paris.<sup>216</sup> Like Lucien, who arrives in Paris with a sizeable amount of money in savings, only to dissipate that money quickly by spending it on clothes, carriages, and food at restaurants, Goliadkin squanders his savings on such luxuries. Yet despite these parallels in Balzac's and Dostoevsky's stories, Goliadkin and *The Double* appear as distorted mirror-images—even *Doppelgängers*—of Lucien and *Lost Illusions*.

Goliadkin's ultimate failure to make himself presentable to high society despite his possession of a significant amount of money shows that the description Lucien's acquaintance Finot gives of Paris is also applicable to Petersburg: "In Paris there are two kinds of success—material success, money, that anyone can pile up; and social success, position, connection, the right of entry into a world closed for ever to certain persons, however great their material success."<sup>217</sup> According to Finot, Lucien achieves the second kind of success because he "has more ability, more talent, and more brains than the people who envy him, and he is marvelously good-looking into the bargain."<sup>218</sup> This contrasts sharply with Dostoevsky's presentation of Goliadkin as an unattractive, socially inept man, to whom the "doors" of Petersburg society remain closed: like Hermann's stealthy entrance into the countess' house in "The Queen of Spades," Goliadkin's invasion of Klara Olsuvyevna's party through the back stairs shows that he can only pass through those "doors" against the intentions of those inside.<sup>219</sup> If Lucien's ambition is legitimated by Balzac's narrative insofar as he proves himself capable of fitting in to

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<sup>213</sup> On Balzac's influence on Dostoevsky, see Leonid Grossman, "Bal'zak i Dostoevskii," *Russkaia mysl'*, no. 1 (1914).

<sup>214</sup> Balzac even discusses technologies of paper production at length. Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 116-17, 578, 744-45; *Lost Illusions*, 108-112, 526-27, 690-91. On the paperiness of Petersburg in *The Double*, see my discussion of paper *assignatsii* in Chapter 3.

<sup>215</sup> Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 179-80, 200; *Lost Illusions*, 171, 190.

<sup>216</sup> Like *Lost Illusions*—as well as Gogol's *Dead Souls*—*The Double* ends with an image of the ambitious hero still on the go, riding in a carriage. *Lost Illusions* ends with Lucien riding in a carriage with Vautrin, who persuades him not to commit suicide as he had planned, but rather to begin another round of ambitious striving. Thus, the novel ends with renewed, rather than fulfilled, failed, renounced, or contained ambition. *Dead Souls* ends similarly, with the ambitious protagonist Chichikov riding into the Russian distance to an unknown destination. This makes *Dead Souls* unique among early Russian literary representations of ambition. By contrast, *The Double*, "The Queen of Spades," and "The Diary of a Madman" all end with their heroes either being driven to, or already locked away in, mental asylums. Comparison of the endings of these Russian texts suggests that ambition has greater room to move in the vast—and less regulated—Russian countryside than it does under the more watchful eyes of high society and the state in St. Petersburg.

<sup>217</sup> Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 502; *Lost Illusions*, 454.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>219</sup> Goliadkin forces his way into Klara Olsufyevna's party by sneaking up the back staircase. Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 131; *The Double*, 34.

the new social position he hopes to attain, Goliadkin appears everywhere out of place. While Lucien is determined not to become a “social rag” (*un haillon social*)—a term he uses to designate an old man “without position or reputation”—Goliadkin is precisely such a man: he is described, and at times describes himself, as a “rag. . . with ambition” (*vetoshka. . . s ambitsiei*).<sup>220</sup> As the phrase “rag with ambition” suggests, even though Pushkin’s and Gogol’s narratives had already created a space for ambition in Russian literature by the time Dostoevsky was writing *The Double*, Dostoevsky still presents ambition as out of place, or inappropriate, in his Russian hero. Whereas in *Lost Illusions*, Lucien is able to learn the social codes of high society, Goliadkin is beyond the learning stage in *The Double*. Not only is Goliadkin unable to master a new set of codes, he actually loses his ability to “read” or communicate with those around him. His eventual mental collapse is a semiotic as well as psychological breakdown.

Goliadkin’s mental collapse points to one of the most important features distinguishing the Russian ambition plots under consideration here from Balzac’s and Stendhal’s novels: in “The Queen of Spades” and *The Double*, as in Gogol’s “The Diary of a Madman,” ambition dissolves, rather than forms, the heroes’ personalities. Of these Russian texts, “The Queen of Spades” is the only one with a young hero, and Hermann’s ambition does not really *form* his character over the rapid course of the story. As Mikhail Gershenzon argues, Hermann’s character is rife with tension from the beginning of the story and suddenly snaps, rather than forming gradually. Tomskii’s anecdote about his grandmother’s secret knowledge of how to win at faro serves as the “external push” (*tolchok izvne*) that snaps the tension between Hermann’s inclinations to save and gamble.<sup>221</sup> This tension in Hermann’s personality is also a kind of delicate psychological balance, and when one side of his personality takes over, the resultant imbalance sends him to Obukhovskaia Hospital.

Following Gogol’s lead, Dostoevsky casts a middle-aged man who has already lived out most of his career in the role of the ambitious hero. In “The Diary of a Madman,” Poprishchin is forty-two years old, and though he assures himself that this is the time when “service is really just beginning” (*tol’ko chto nachinaetsia sluzhba*), it is difficult to imagine that someone still sharpening pens for the director at his age might ever reach the rank of general, as Poprishchin claims he can.<sup>222</sup> As for Goliadkin, his epithet, “senior” (*starshii*), distinguishes him from his equally ambitious but more successful double, Goliadkin “junior” (*mladshii*) and hints at the competition he faces from younger men in both public and private life. The senior hero refers to the social superiority young men enjoy when he complains to his doctor, “[E]very little brat. . . turns up his nose before a decent person now” (*[V]siakii mal’chishka. . . pered poriadocnym chelovekom nos zadiraet teper’*).<sup>223</sup> Moreover, by representing Goliadkin’s double as a “junior” version of the hero, Dostoevsky may also allude to the ambitious young “doubles” of that character in French novels like *Lost Illusions*. Whereas the French novels of ambition follow the development of young characters that seem to have ample time in which to pursue their ambition, “The Diary of a Madman” and *The Double* suggest that it is already too late for their heroes to rise. Indeed, like Poprishchin, Goliadkin not only proves unable to rise any higher on the Table of Ranks, but also experiences a complete mental breakdown that causes him to lose his job altogether: he falls off the social ladder rather than climbing it.

<sup>220</sup> Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 699; *Lost Illusions*, 646; Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 168; *The Double*, 86.

<sup>221</sup> M. O. Gershenzon, *Mudrost’ Pushkina* (Moscow: Knigoizdatel’stvo Pisatelei v Moskve, 1919), 99.

<sup>222</sup> Gogol, “Zapiski sumasshedshego,” 161; “The Diary of a Madman,” 284.

<sup>223</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 119; *The Double*, 17.

A far cry indeed from Julien's firm and silent acceptance of his impending execution in the *The Red and the Black*, Pushkin's and Dostoevsky's heroes are last heard issuing confused babble or cries of despair. In "The Queen of Spades," Hermann's last words issue from within the Obukhovskaya Hospital, where he has ceased to communicate with others and sits endlessly repeating the sequence of cards he wished to play and the sequence he played instead: "he doesn't answer any questions and mumbles unusually quickly: —Three, seven, ace! Three, seven, queen! . ." (*ne otvechaet ni na kakie voprosy i bormochet neobyknovenno skoro: --Troika, semerka, tuz! Troika, semerka, dama! . .*).<sup>224</sup> Rather than remembering and cherishing his past like Julien, Hermann can neither understand nor move beyond his loss at faro. As his mumbling and the ellipses that follow it suggest, he remains stuck in an unending cycle of mad fantasy and failure.

*The Double* ends with Goliadkin in a state of complete panic, crying out and clutching his head at the thought of where his doctor may be taking him: "Our hero cried out and clutched his head. Alas! he had long ago foreseen this!" (*Geroi nash vskriknul i skhvatil sebia za golovu. Uvy! on eto davno uzhe predchuvstvoval!*).<sup>225</sup> Whereas Julien foresees his execution and makes plans that are eventually carried out, Goliadkin claims he had "foreseen this," but these supposed presentiments only highlight how futile his attempts at self-control have been. The final image of Goliadkin being carted out of Petersburg against his will shows just how little control he has over his own person. Furthermore, Dostoevsky's use of free indirect discourse in this line manifests the final disintegration of Goliadkin's personality, as the narrator describes Goliadkin simultaneously from without and within: the hero is objectified as "he," but his inner hysteria comes to the surface in emotionally charged, and accordingly punctuated, exclamations. Thus, *The Double* ends with both Goliadkin and the narrator fractured and dislocated—it is unclear where one begins and the other ends.

As we have seen, in both "The Queen of Spades" and *The Double*, ambition structures plot by propelling characters' movements around the fantastic space of Petersburg, leading them to chase after paradoxically ghostly futures. By inserting the historically grounded French plot of bourgeois ambition into the genre of the fantastic tale, these authors replace the "serious" tone of Stendhal's and Balzac's social novels with the epistemological uncertainty typical of the fantastic tale.<sup>226</sup> Raising but not answering the question of whether ambition is rational or irrational, natural or supernatural, the narrators in "The Queen of Spades" and *The Double* not only reserve judgment about the nature of ambition, they unsettle the foundations on which any judgments might rest. In these works, fantastic uncertainty is a *tonal* opacity that renders ambition stubbornly mysterious: is it magic, madness, or the result of a collision with an unyielding social hierarchy?

### Trembling in "The Queen of Spades"

<sup>224</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 252; "The Queen of Spades," 233.

<sup>225</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvojniki*, 229; *The Double*, 170.

<sup>226</sup> I rely on Tzvetan Todorov's classic definition of the fantastic as a genre that produces "uncertainty" and "hesitation" in characters and readers who are confronted with supernatural occurrences, which the narrator neither affirms nor denies. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard, (Cleveland and London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), 25.

In focusing on where ambition leads characters and plots, I have so far been treating it as a forward-moving drive, or desire, rather than as a feeling that is experienced in the present. At this point, I will reexamine “The Queen of Spades” and then *The Double* as an *emotion* that is experienced by characters and articulated by authors as distinctly economic in nature.<sup>227</sup> One of the most striking features of Pushkin’s story is the sharp contrast between the author’s stylistic “economy of means” and his narrative of economic and emotional excess. The story conveys the excesses of economic passions—such as ambition, avarice, and gambling—in a language of seemingly dispassionate brevity. This contradiction between the economic logics of *fabula* and *siuzhet* might seem to reduplicate on a formal level the psychological contradiction in the hero Hermann, who is described as both passionate and thrifty. But whereas Hermann’s opposing psychological tendencies produce an extreme tension that ultimately snaps, Pushkin’s narrator maintains a stylistic pose of equanimity and restraint, remaining distant from, and impervious to, the hero’s emotional imbalance. Pushkin’s laconic account of the mad Hermann tucked away in Obukhovskaia Hospital is emblematic of how the story as a whole restrains the economic passions it represents.

The restraint of passions that the narrator models so efficiently forms part of a more general structural opposition in the story between feeling and unfeeling. Pushkin repeatedly stages scenes in which passions (*strasti*) are met by dispassion, and feelings—or sentiments (*chuvstva*)—are appealed to but are not felt. Furthermore, Pushkin seems especially drawn to the image of a sudden flash of passion amidst dispassion, or a momentary and only slightly perceptible feeling that flares up on an unfeeling face, animating an otherwise lifeless mask before receding again. How does Pushkin represent the excesses of economic passions economically? And what is at stake in this game of emotions, their control, and their absence? By exploring these questions in the pages to follow, I broaden what has been this chapter’s focus on ambition, considering how this feeling fits into Pushkin’s play with economic passions, sentiments, their origins, and their control. The aim of this discussion is to explore aspects of Pushkin’s representation of the emotions that ambition helps to make visible, rather than to delve deeper into a consideration of ambition itself.

In the unpublished article of 1830, “Refutation of Criticisms” (“Oproverzhenie na kritiki”), Pushkin shows that at this time he was actively thinking about how best to represent the passions in literature. He acknowledges that in his Romantic southern poems, his representation of the passions is excessive, and he explains this as youthful folly: “Young writers do not know how to represent the physical movements of the passions. Their heroes always shake, laugh wildly, gnash their teeth and so on. All that is ridiculous, like a melodrama.” (*Molodye pisateli voobshche ne umeiut izobrazhat’ fizicheskie dvizheniia strastei. Ikh gerio vseгда sodragaiutsia, khokhochut diko, skrezheshchut zubami i proch. Vse eto smeshno, kak melodrama.*)<sup>228</sup> Pushkin’s concern with how to represent the “physical movements” of the passions may be understood in light of the contemporary association of passions with the body, and in particular with internal bodily movements and flows.<sup>229</sup> The definition of the word *strast’* in the 1822 edition of the *Dictionary of the Russian Academy* exemplifies this physiological understanding of the passions:

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<sup>227</sup> In exploring ambition as a feeling rather than a drive, I am inspired by Sedgwick’s discussion of affect and drive, and her call for greater attention to the former. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham & London: Duke University Press Books, 2003), 17-21.

<sup>228</sup> Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, “Oproverzhenie na kritiki,” *PSS* 11:145.

<sup>229</sup> On Pushkin’s interest in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century theories of the physiological origins of the emotions, see Andrew Kahn, “Body and Soul,” *Pushkin’s Lyric Intelligence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 278-338.

“A strong feeling of desire or revulsion, united with unusual movements of the blood and life spirits” (*Sil'noe chuvstvovanie okhoty ili otrashcheniia, soedinennoe s neobyknovennym dvizheniem krovi i zhiznennykh dukhov*).<sup>230</sup>

As an illustration of how he formerly represented the external “physical movements of the passions,” Pushkin cites a passage from his narrative poem, “The Fountain of Bakhchisarai” (“Bakhchisaraiskii fontan,” 1824), at which he says his friend Aleksandr Raevskii rightfully “chuckled” (*khokhotal*):

Он часто в сечах роковых  
Подъемлет саблю, и с размаха  
Недвижим остается вдруг,  
Глядит с безумием вокруг,  
Бледнеет, [etc.]

Often in fateful battles  
He raises his saber, and with a swing  
Suddenly remains motionless,  
He looks around madly,  
He turns pale, [etc.]<sup>231</sup>

Here, Pushkin represents the passions through a bold saber swing, a mad look around, and a face turning pale. By 1830, he reads the physicality of this passage as laughably exaggerated. But there is more going on in this section of “Refutation of Criticisms” than Pushkin’s consideration of how one ought to represent the passions in a realistic way. The author demonstrates here a characteristic desire to strike a pose of affective distance from an emotional scene, to present the movements of the passions, but to freeze and frame them with a dispassionate dismissal. This desire guides his representation of the emotions in “The Queen of Spades” as well.

In “The Queen of Spades,” Pushkin retains his former focus on the “physical movements of the passions,” but restrains those movements considerably. The passionate hero Hermann does not “shake,” “laugh wildly,” or “gnash his teeth.” Instead, he “trembles,” as does the sensitive young woman he deceives, Lizaveta. Less physically excessive than a sword swing or even a shake, trembling is a more economic, or in other words more efficient, sign of emotionality. Moreover, trembling efficiently raises but does not answer the question of whether emotions are physiological in nature. In Russian, the words *trepeta* and *trepetat'*, which I am translating as “tremble,” can refer to a physical movement—a slight shaking or palpitation—or an emotional agitation—such as fear or excitement—that may *not* be accompanied by any physical event.

In “The Queen of Spades” there are instances of trembling that seem unambiguously physical, as when Hermann waits outside of the countess’ house for his chance to penetrate it, and Pushkin’s comparison of the hero to a “tiger” ready to pounce conveys physical as well as emotional agitation: “Hermann waited for the appointed time, trembling like a tiger” (*Germann trepetal, kak tigr, ozhidaia naznachennogo vremeni*).<sup>232</sup> There are also times when the word *trepeta* not only signals no obvious physical occurrence, but also explicitly presents the nature of

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<sup>230</sup> “Strast’,” Rossiiskaiia akademiia nauk, *Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia nauk, 1789).

<sup>231</sup> Cited in Pushkin, “Oproverzhenie na kritiki,” 145.

<sup>232</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 239; “The Queen of Spades,” 222.

emotional agitation as an enigma. For instance, when Lizaveta passes by Hermann, whom she has seen spying on her several times already, outside the countess' house, her fear of him induces her *trepot*: "Lizaveta Ivanovna was frightened, though she did not know why, and got into the carriage, trembling inexplicably" (*Lizaveta Ivanovna ispugalas', sama ne znaia chego, i sela v karetu s trepetom neiz'iasnimym*).<sup>233</sup> Any translation of this sentence into English unfortunately smoothes over the ambiguity that exists in Russian about whether Lizaveta is physically trembling, as "*s trepetom*" could mean "trembling" or "with a tremor [either physical or emotional]." The qualifier "inexplicably" reinforces the ambiguity of the form as well as the cause of Lizaveta's *trepot*.

Trembling in "The Queen of Spades" also poses questions of a more economic orientation, and here I use the word economic not in the sense of "efficient," but rather in the general sense of pertaining to economic objects and structures, like money, or social hierarchies. The narrator's description of Hermann, which I have cited earlier in this chapter but return to here with a new emphasis, introduces him as a person who is full of conflicting economic emotions, and also as a habitual trembler:

Германн был сын обрусевшего немца, оставившего ему маленький капитал. Будучи твердо убежден в необходимости упрочить свою независимость, Германн не касался и процентов, жил одним жалованьем, не позволял себе малейшей прихоти. Впрочем, он был скрытен и честолюбив, и товарищи его редко имели случай посмеяться над его излишней бережливостью. Он имел сильные страсти и огненное воображение, но твердость спасла его от обыкновенных заблуждений молодости. Так, например, будучи в душе игрок, никогда не брал он карты в руки, ибо рассчитал, что его состояние не позволяло ему (как сказывал он) *жертвовать необходимым в надежде приобрести излишнее*, — а между тем, целые ночи просиживал за карточными столами, и следовал с лихорадочным трепетом за различными оборотами игры.

Hermann was the son of a Russified Herman, who had left him a little capital. Firmly resolved to ensure his independence, Hermann did not touch even the interest earned by these funds; he lived on his salary alone, denying himself even the slightest extravagance. Since he was also reserved and proud, his comrades rarely had occasion to laugh at this excessive thriftiness. He had strong passions and a fiery imagination, but his resoluteness saved him from the usual lapses of youth. He was, for example, a gambler at heart but never touched a card, reckoning that his circumstances did not allow him (as he was fond of saying) to sacrifice the necessary in the hope of gaining the superfluous. Yet at the same time he would sit by the card table whole nights and follow with feverish trembling the different turns of the game.<sup>234</sup>

Although Pushkin does not name them individually, from this passage we can see that Hermann's "strong passions" include ambition and avarice as well as gambling, and that these passions are restrained by his "firmness" of character. His "feverish trembling" may be interpreted as a sign of either a physical or a figurative struggle to suppress the flow of passions.

<sup>233</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 234; "The Queen of Spades," 218. Translation modified.

<sup>234</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 235; "The Queen of Spades," 218-19.

The tension in Hermann's character between passion and restraint raises the question of whether passions can be effectively controlled by reason, a question of growing importance to European social theorists and early psychiatrists as the violent passions of the French Revolution and the period of unchecked ambitions that followed it starkly countered the Enlightenment's optimistic belief in the compatibility of emotions—in the form of cultivated sentiments—with reason and good social order.<sup>235</sup> This question was also explored by economic theorists like Adam Smith, who contended that even avarice, long considered one of the most pernicious passions, could be sublimated or kept in check by a more rational and purportedly beneficial form of acquisitiveness: economic interest.<sup>236</sup> In Hermann, Pushkin puts uncontrollable economic passions—ambition, avarice, and gambling—in such close proximity with the bourgeois ideal of economic interest that their boundaries are imperceptible and ultimately untenable.

Even though Hermann's desire to achieve financial and social "independence" demonstrates his passionate ambition as well as his thrift, Pushkin shows just how out of place ambition seems in both the Russian language and Russian high society by never naming it directly. Since the adjective "*chestoliubiv*," which could theoretically be used to reference ambition, clearly points to Hermann's proud attempts to hide his thrift instead, it appears that the Russian language itself resists the French ambition plot.<sup>237</sup> Moreover, Pushkin's description of Hermann in the above passage occludes the importance of the French sources of the ambitious hero's emotional makeup by focusing the reader's attention on Hermann's German heritage. Pushkin covers over French ambition with German thrift. To a reader well indoctrinated in the so-called protestant ethic, it might seem like this thrift is purely rational and dispassionate, contrasting sharply with Hermann's more passionate tendencies. However, the phrase "excessive thriftiness" suggests that in the cultural context of elite Russian society, Hermann's desire to amass and save money appears excessive; indeed, this is why Hermann wishes to conceal it from his noble friends, who, according to the social norms of the day, would gamble in order to display their indifference to money.<sup>238</sup> Though Hermann discusses his refusal to gamble in terms of a rejection of excess, saying he cannot "sacrifice the necessary in the hope of obtaining the "superfluous" (*izlishnee*), his repetition of this explanation—indicated by the imperfective aspect used in the phrase "as he would say," and also by Pushkin's own repetition of this phrase, which occurs at one other point in the story as well, suggests compulsive—and hence passionate—saving. What might seem like ambition in France or like prudence in Germany looks a lot like avarice in Russia.

Thus, part of the psychological tension in Hermann, and the narrative tension in "The Queen of Spades," results from the close proximity of Russian noble and European bourgeois economic models of emotionality that push and pull against one another. Rather than being divided neatly between passion and reason, Hermann is torn between the noble Russian passion for gambling, the foreign bourgeois passion of ambition, and the sinful passion of avarice, with the excesses of the latter two hidden beneath a façade of purportedly rational calculation and thrift. Hermann's feverish trembling signals not only the character's attempts to restrain his

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<sup>235</sup> See William M Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*.

<sup>236</sup> See Albert O Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*.

<sup>237</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Russian ambition words, see Chapter 1. For their definitions, see the Appendix.

<sup>238</sup> As Andrew Wachtel has discussed, the primary mode of rising up in society in nineteenth-century Europe—amassing a fortune—runs counter to the cultural values of the elite Russian society that Hermann would like to join. Wachtel, "Rereading 'The Queen of Spades,'" 16-18.

passions, but also the text's vacillation between culturally specific passions and interests. This representation of economic passions as culturally conditioned is an indication of Pushkin's engagement with the question of whether the emotions might be subject to social determination. As we have already seen, this question was of major concern to the early French psychiatrists whose studies of *monomanie ambitieuse* I discuss in Chapter 1. Pushkin's exploration of it in "The Queen of Spades" shows that for him, as for early French psychiatrists, ambition proved capable of demonstrating that emotions are indeed social.

In addition to differentiating characters' emotional relationships to economics on the basis of national origin, Pushkin assigns distinct emotional profiles to characters occupying various socio-economic positions. For instance, the two highly emotional "tremblers" in the story, Hermann and Lizaveta, both live on the social margins of the old Russian nobility represented by the countess and her house, and both dream of escaping that position: Hermann sits on the sidelines of his friends' play, desiring the financial "independence" their gambling displays; Lizaveta is the countess' ward, who, like Hermann, knows the "bitterness of dependence" (*gorech' zavisimosti*), and she longs to marry so as to escape her position of dependency.<sup>239</sup> As shown in the above quotations in which German "trembles like a tiger" and Lizaveta experiences an inexplicable *trepēt*, these characters tend to tremble near the boundaries of the countess' house, the social space Hermann would like to enter and the one Lizaveta would like to flee. This trembling on the margins of the old nobility appears as a sign of the characters' personal ambitions, and it also suggests that the eighteenth-century Russian social structures are being shaken—but only ever so slightly—by the attempted mobility of nineteenth-century men and women like Hermann and Lizaveta.

Although Hermann and Lizaveta parallel one another in their desire for social mobility, they also represent conflicting, and generically coded, models of emotional exchange. While Hermann—as the embodiment of unchecked economic passions—is reminiscent of Stendhal's and Balzac's Romantic-Realist heroes, Lizaveta is a sentimentalist figure who has feelings (*chuvstva*), rather than passions, and her relationship with Hermann proceeds according to the model of sentimentalist epistolary fiction. Pushkin is able to use trembling as an efficient sign of feeling for characters who represent contrasting models of the emotions and who experience different emotions—for instance Hermann's avarice versus Lizaveta's mixture of fear and excitement—because trembling is itself an emotional cliché, which occurs frequently in poetry by writers such as Gavriila Derzhavin (1743-1816), Vasilii Zhukovskii (1783-1852) and Konstantin Batiushkov (1787-1855), and also by Pushkin himself.<sup>240</sup> And so another sense in which trembling is an "economic" means of representing the passions is that, as a cliché, it is a cheap sign of emotion that can be used in any situation.

In this regard, Pushkin's repeated use of trembling demonstrates his more general tendency—at work in his prose collection *The Tales of the Late Ivan Petrovich Belkin* (*Povesti pokoinogo Ivana Petrovicha Belkina*, 1831) as well as "The Queen of Spades"—to deal in clichés, a tendency the narrator frankly alludes to at one point by calling Hermann a "character quite hackneyed by now" (*uzhe poshloe litso*).<sup>241</sup> So what is Pushkin doing with emotional clichés like ambitious heroes, uncontrollable passions, trembling, and sentimentalist sympathy for an impecunious young girl? I propose that his primary object is not the parody of any given

<sup>239</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 233-34; "The Queen of Spades," 217.

<sup>240</sup> Instances of "trepēt," "trepētān'e," "trepētāt'" and "trepētnyi'" in Pushkin's works fill several pages in the *Dictionary of Pushkin's Language*. Institut iazykoznaniiā, *Slovar' iazyka Pushkina*.

<sup>241</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 244; "The Queen of Spades," 226.

literary type, but rather the pleasure he clearly takes in striking poses of emotional distance from the emotions he represents.<sup>242</sup> Pushkin works with literary clichés as with dead bodies that he animates briefly, only to watch coolly as he then cuts off the flow of feeling. In this regard he resembles Luigi Galvani (1737-98), the Italian scientist who was well known in Russia in the early nineteenth century, whom Pushkin references when he describes the old countess' rocking movements as the result of some "hidden Galvanism" (*skrytogo galvanizma*).<sup>243</sup> On the basis of the experiments Galvani conducted on dead frogs, which he made twitch by touching their legs with pieces of metal, he argued that an organic form of electricity flows through human and animal bodies.<sup>244</sup> In "The Queen of Spades," Pushkin's representation of emotions through clichés like trembling displays a Galvanic impulse to make—and watch—the dead twitch.

This impulse is also perceptible when Pushkin shows momentary flashes of vitality and feeling on the faces of the least emotional characters in the story—the old countess and the great gambler Chekalinskii, representatives of an impassive, elite society which Hermann aspires to join.

For example, in Hermann's late-night encounter with the countess, his hope of winning a fortune depends on his ability to make her feel some sympathy or affection for him. He appeals to her emotions by using sentimentalist rhetoric of feeling as well as references to the eighteenth-century cultural model of favoritism. But these models of emotional exchange Hermann uses are as old and crusty as the countess herself, and his mention of her former favorite, Chaplitskii, provokes only a fleeting sign of emotion on her face:

—Вспомните Чаплицкого, которому помогли вы отыгаться.  
Графиня видимо смутилась. Черты ее изобразили сильное движение души, но она скоро впала в прежнюю бесчувственность.

"Remember Chaplitskii, whom you helped to win back his loss."  
The Countess grew visibly confused. Her features betrayed a profound stirring of her heart, but she soon relapsed into her former numbness.<sup>245</sup>

The countess' brief display of feeling is a truncated version of Hermann's own as he stops speaking, "trembling in anticipation of her answer" (*s trepetom ozhidal ee otveta*).<sup>246</sup> Whereas the countess seems to have only enough emotional reserves for a quick facial twitch, Hermann's ample supply of passion keeps him trembling for an unspecified period of time. When he threatens her with a pistol, she again shows a momentary flash of feeling—presumably fear—but then finally collapses, as though struck dead by the sudden surge of emotion through her body:

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<sup>242</sup> Cf. David M. Bethea and Sergei Davydov, "Pushkin's Saturnine Cupid: The Poetics of Parody in The Tales of Belkin," *PMLA* 96, no. 1 (January 1981): 8-21.

<sup>243</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 240; "The Queen of Spades," 223.

<sup>244</sup> Debreczeny, Notes to "The Queen of Spades," 518, note 22.

<sup>245</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 241; "The Queen of Spades," 224. On the dynamic of mobility/immobility in relation to Chekalinsky and the countess, cf. Lotman, "Tema kart," 137-37; "Theme and Plot," 480-83. Whereas Lotman focuses on gambling as a mobile force that disrupts the mechanized, "immobile" life of high society in Petersburg, I am particularly interested in Pushkin's representation of emotions (and their "movements").

<sup>246</sup> Pushkin, "Pikovaia dama," 241; "The Queen of Spades," 224.

При виде пистолета графиня во второй раз оказала сильное чувство. Она закивала головою, и подняла руку, как бы заслоняясь от выстрела... Потом покатила навзничь... и осталась недвижима.

At the sight of the pistol the Countess once more betrayed a strong emotion. She jerked back her head and raised her hand as if to shield herself from the shot... Then she rolled over backwards... and remained motionless.<sup>247</sup>

Though Hermann does not physically attack the countess, the feeling (*chuvstvo*) he provokes in her with his passionate appeal acts as a deadly physical force.

At the end of the story, Hermann's three standoffs with Chekalinskii at the gambling table are structured in a similar way. Chekalinskii represents yet another model of emotional exchange—a polite, gentlemanly submission to the rules of gambling, whether he wins or loses a small or an enormous sum. His face, “with its immutable smile” (*s neizmennoi svoieiu ulybkoiu*), is a mask of “cordiality” (*laskovost'*) and “cheerfulness” (*vesolost'*) that is almost as dispassionate as the countess' “dead face” (*mertvoe litso*).<sup>248</sup> Yet Chekalinskii's face shows a sudden flash of feeling when Hermann wins his first game of faro: “Chekalinskii frowned for a moment, but the usual smile soon returned to his face” (*Chekalinskii nakhmurilsia, no ulybka tochas vozvratilas' na ego litso*).<sup>249</sup> As in the scene of the countess' death, in the scene of Hermann's first win against Chekalinskii, the success of the protagonist's ambitious project is linked to his ability to make members of the high nobility experience emotions, and in each case, the fleeting quality of the emotions he stirs in them shows that he is unable to create a lasting change in his social circumstances or theirs.

Like Hermann's and Lizaveta's trembling, at least in the instances when trembling is apparently a physical occurrence, the countess' short-lived feelings and Chekalinskii's frown are examples of Pushkin's “economic” representation of the emotions through tiny movements that recall the twitching of Galvani's frogs. The final instance of this economic, Galvanic representation of the emotions is when Hermann loses his fortune in his third game of faro. As Hermann sees that he has accidentally played the wrong card, the face on the queen of spades is animated, while the passionate hero is left frozen:

Германн вздрогнул: в самом деле, вместо туза у него стояла пиковая дама. . . .  
В эту минуту ему показалось, что пиковая дама прищурилась и усмехнулась.  
Необыкновенное сходство поразило его. . .  
—Старуха! —закричал он в ужасе.  
Чекалинский потянул к себе проигранные билеты. Германн стоял неподвижно.

Hermann shuddered: indeed, instead of an ace, the queen of spades lay before him. . . .  
Suddenly, it seemed to him that the queen of spades had screwed up her eyes and grinned. An extraordinary likeness struck him...  
“The old woman!” he cried out in terror.

<sup>247</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 242; “The Queen of Spades,” 225.

<sup>248</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 249-50; “The Queen of Spades,” 230-1.

<sup>249</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 251; “The Queen of Spades,” 232.

Chekalinskii gathered in the bank notes lost by Hermann. The young man stood by the table, motionless.<sup>250</sup>

As the dead countess comes alive in the face of the playing card, screwing up her eyes and laughing, Hermann is left “motionless,” much as the countess was when she died. The physical immobility of the hero with a passion for social mobility anticipates Hermann’s ultimate incarceration in Obukhovskaia Hospital in displaying Pushkin’s penchant for paralyzing the “physical movements of the passions.”

By not only shutting Hermann away in the Hospital, but also abandoning him there a few paragraphs before the end of the story so as to recount what happened later to the other characters, Pushkin closes on a note of tonal neutrality. Like Lizaveta Ivanovna and Tomskii, both of whom are said to have made favorable marriage matches, the narrator moves on, apparently unperturbed by Hermann’s attempted social coup or his psychological breakdown.<sup>251</sup> If one were to search “The Queen of Spades” for what Siane Ngai calls the “feeling-tone” that pervades a literary text, it is difficult to imagine what sort of “feeling” one could identify, unless one considers the restraint of feeling itself to be a feeling. Because Pushkin portrays Hermann and Lizaveta as clichéd literary types, it might be tempting to say that the tone of the story is ironic, but this would not suffice, because irony is more of an attitude than a feeling. Moreover, even using the narrower understanding of tone as attitude, to say this is the dominant tone of “The Queen of Spades” would, in my view, ascribe too great a degree of emotional distance between the writer and the written. In fact, Pushkin’s habitual provocation and subsequent suppression of feeling suggests that the discrepancy between his stylistic economy of means and his narrative of economic and emotional excess may reduplicate the divide between Hermann’s thrifty and passionate tendencies after all. Just as Hermann’s thrift, or interest, is not so neatly opposed to his passions as it purports to be, but rather shades off imperceptibly into the passions of ambition and avarice even before it is eventually overwhelmed by the passion for gambling, we might also think of Pushkin’s stylistic thrift as a tool he deploys repeatedly—even passionately—to experience the thrill of professing his distance from the passions he puts into play. He gives characters motions and emotions only to stop them dead and chuckle along with Raevskii, or laugh like the queen of spades. Though this laughter is ostensibly ironic, it feels almost like a genuine tremble.

### Embarrassment in *The Double*

As the story of a “rag with ambition,” *The Double* reveals the hero’s ambitions to be unfounded pretensions: Goliadkin not only fails to elevate himself in society, but loses the middling position he originally had, sinking so low in his own and others’ estimation of him that he eventually concedes that he would even “allow himself to be dirtied like an old rag for wiping muddy boots” (*Pozvolit’ zhe zateret’ sebia, kak vetoshku, ob kotoruiu griaznye sapogi obtiraiut*).<sup>252</sup> And yet, the narrator adds, even if Goliadkin *would* allow himself to be used as a boot rag, he would nonetheless be a boot rag with *ambitsiia* and *feelings*: “[T]his would be a rag with ambition, this would be a rag with ambition and feelings—unrequited ambition and unrequited feelings” (*[V]etoshka eta byla by s ambitsiei, vetoshka-to eta byla by s odushevleniem i chuvstvami, khotia*

<sup>250</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 251-2; “The Queen of Spades,” 233.

<sup>251</sup> Pushkin, “Pikovaia dama,” 252; “The Queen of Spades,” 233.

<sup>252</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 168; *The Double*, 85.

by *i s bezotvetnoi ambitsiei i s bezotvetnymi chuvstvami*).<sup>253</sup> But what exactly is Goliadkin's *ambitsiia*, and what are these "feelings" with which it is associated? While earlier in this chapter, I have discussed Goliadkin's ambition in connection with the narrative motions it propels, in the pages that follow, I explore a dominant emotion it produces in both the protagonist and the reader: embarrassment.<sup>254</sup>

*Ambitsiia* poses significant difficulty for anyone wishing to translate *The Double* into English, because, as discussed in Chapter 1 and as shown in the Appendix, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century it had two rather different meanings. While *ambitsiia* could refer to an "extreme and inordinate desire for wealth, titles, honor" (*chrezvyzhainoe i nepomernoie zhelanie k bogatsvu, k dostoinstvam, k chesti*), making it appear synonymous with English "ambition" or French *ambition*, it also had an alternative, uniquely Russian meaning of a "feeling of personal worth" (*chuvstvo sobstvennogo dostoinstva*).<sup>255</sup> In accordance with the polyvalence of *ambitsiia* as a concept, in their recent translation, Pevear and Volokhonsky render *ambitsiia* at times as "ambition" and at other times as "pride" or "vanity." For instance, they translate "*vetoshka. . . s ambitsiei*" as "rag with ambition," and yet they use "vanity" in the following passage, in which Goliadkin chastises himself for his own *ambitsiia*, which by this point in the novel has already led him through a series of disastrous social encounters, including several meetings with his own double that are particularly damaging to his feeling of self-worth: "Fool that I am, galloping away with my vanity! There's where I got with my vanity! That's vanity for you, you scoundrel, that's vanity for you!" (*Rasskakalsia, duralei, ia s ambitsiei! Tuda zhe polez za ambitsiei! Vot tebe i ambitsiia, podlets ty etakoi, vot i ambitsiia!*).<sup>256</sup> Surveying the roughly fifteen times *ambitsiia* occurs in *The Double*, it appears that a feeling of personal worth, or even vanity, is closer to what Dostoevsky means by this word than is the idea of striving for social elevation. But surveying the work as a whole, it becomes clear that Dostoevsky actually pits these two meanings of *ambitsiia* against each other, and that this semantic confrontation—which is also a cultural one—is a crucial structuring principle of both the plot and tone of *The Double*.

Like Gogol and Pushkin, Dostoevsky uses narrative strategies that make it difficult for readers to reach a conclusion about what they are meant to think about ambition and its place in Russian society. Dostoevsky switches terminology, however, giving Goliadkin *ambitsiia* rather than the *chestoliubie* of Gogol's "The Diary of a Madman" or the unnamed "passions" (*strasti*) of Pushkin's "The Queen of Spades." Confronting Goliadkin's self-esteem in a society that does not value social striving with his desire for social elevation, *The Double* explores how *ambitsiia* feels to the internally conflicted hero who has it. Whereas Goliadkin frequently admits that he has *ambitsiia* in the uniquely Russian sense of a feeling of self worth, he routinely disavows the desire for social elevation he clearly entertains, and which propels the plot of *The Double* at an increasingly frantic, though perpetually interrupted, pace. The dynamic interplay between Goliadkin's awareness and denial of his *ambitsiia* and the multiple meanings of this word make *ambitsiia* a shadowy, duplicitous concept, which continually escapes the narrator and readers' field of assessment.

<sup>253</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 168; *The Double*, 86.

<sup>254</sup> Recent years have seen a growing interest in embarrassment and shame in Dostoevsky's works. See Deborah A. Martinsen, *Surprised by Shame: Dostoevsky's Liars and Narrative Exposure* (Ohio State University Press, 2003); Alyson Tapp, "Embarrassment in *The Idiot*" (Ch. 2 in PhD dissertation, University of California, 2011).

<sup>255</sup> "Ambitsiia," Ianovskii, *Novyi slovolot'kovatel'*. "Ambitsiia," *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XVIII veka*.

<sup>256</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 178; *The Double*, 99.

As Goliadkin tries to elevate himself in society according to the French literary model of the bourgeois plot of ambition, he loses his Russian feeling of self-worth and finds himself ejected from Petersburg as a madman. The multi-linear, multi-directional plot that results from the blockage of Goliadkin's ambition and its displacement onto his more successful double consists of a series of embarrassing encounters in which the hero makes *faux pas* and strikes "false notes," and this, in turn, contributes to the embarrassing tone of the text. What I mean by tone here is Ngai's expanded formulation of "feeling-tone" as the "global and hyperrelational concept of *feeling* that encompasses attitude: a literary text's affective bearing, orientation, or 'set toward' its audience and world."<sup>257</sup> What makes this idea of tone such a productive category for a reading of ambition in *The Double* is that Goliadkin's chief ambition is to join the society of "bon ton" (*khoroshego tona*).<sup>258</sup> Thus, *The Double* appears not just as a metaliterary, but actually a meta-tonal text.

As Hugh Mclean notes in his article, "The Tone(s) of Evgenii Onegin," in addition to its musical and literary meanings, in early nineteenth-century Russia, the word *ton* (tone), adopted from the French *ton* also meant a "whole style of life, a stance, a posture, an outward 'image' one seeks to create."<sup>259</sup> In this social usage, tone sounds a lot like Ngai's idea of literary tone as "affective bearing." In *Lost Illusions*, Balzac discusses the behavioral tone, or "affective bearing" of high Parisian society in musical terms:

The principal merit of beautiful manners and the tone of high society (*ton de la haute compagnie*) is that it presents a harmonious whole, in which everything is so subtly blended that nothing jars. Even those who do not, either from ignorance or because they are carried away by some impulse, observe the laws of this science will understand that a single false note (*une seule dissonance*) is, as in music, a complete negation of Art itself, all of whose conditions must be observed down to the smallest details in order for it to exist.<sup>260</sup>

Referring to the "tone of high society," Balzac observes the aestheticization of everyday life that distinguishes the habitus of the *beau monde*. In general, *Lost Illusions* is the story of an ambitious young man who must learn to aestheticize his behavior in accordance with the laws of *bon ton*. Although he does make blunders, on the whole Lucien proves capable of learning those laws. In *The Double*, by contrast, the hero Goliadkin tries desperately to behave in accordance with the laws of *bon ton*, and fails disastrously.

In *The Double*, the word "ton" appears about twenty-five times, most often with the meaning of a style of life or behavior. Goliadkin is extremely concerned—even obsessed—with trying to achieve *bon ton*. His concern with tone begins to seem especially hysterical, and especially meta-tonal, when one listens to him continuously stammering out the name of his immediate supervisor, Anton Antonovich (emphasis added):

—Я, Антон Антонович, слава богу,—заикаясь, проговорил господин Голядкин. —Я, Антон Антонович, совершенно здоров; я, Антон Антонович,

<sup>257</sup> Ngai, 43.

<sup>258</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 114-15; *The Double*, 10-11.

<sup>259</sup> Hugh McLean, "The Tone(s) of Evgenii Onegin," *California Slavic Studies* 6 (1971): 4.

<sup>260</sup> Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 183; *Lost Illusions*, 175. Translation modified.

теперь ничего—прибавил он нерешительно, не совсем еще доверяя часто поминаемому им Антону Антоновичу.

“I thank God, Anton Antonovich,” Mr. Goliadkin said, faltering, “I’m perfectly well, Anton Antonovich; I’m all right now, Anton Antonovich,” he added hesitantly, still not quite trusting the oft-mentioned Anton Antonovich.<sup>261</sup>

If one counts all the instances in which Goliadkin addresses Anton Antonovich by name, the number of times *ton* appears in the text soars to around 200, making tone—that elusive object of Goliadkin’s ambitions—resound through the novel like a social death knell.

An 1825 article translated from French and published in the *Moscow Telegraph* gives a good indication of how impossible it would be for Goliadkin to realize his ambition to acquire *bon ton*. Entitled “About High Society and *bon ton*” (“O svetskikh obshchestvakh i khoroshem tone”), this article states that *bon ton* involves “Perfect knowledge of the proprieties of society” (*Sovershennoe znanie prilichii bol’shogo sveta*), and that to achieve it, it is essential to know one’s place, and to stay in it: “[T]o know one’s *place* in high society, occupy it *perfectly*, and not to cross over the boundaries even by a step... to make oneself equal to others in that place that has been *appointed to you*” (*[U]znat’ svoe mesto v bol’shom svete, zaniat’ ego sovershenno, no ne perekhodit’ ni na shag za predely... uravnovesit’ sebja s drugimi na tom meste, kotoroe vam naznachat*).<sup>262</sup> If good tone entails knowing one’s place and not moving out of it “even by a step,” then ambition, which propels movement out of one’s place, is decidedly bad tone.

Caught between the paradoxical ambition to elevate himself to the society of *bon ton* and injured feeling of self-worth, Goliadkin finds himself continuously out of place. A good example of this perpetual displacement, and the embarrassment it produces, occurs during Goliadkin’s visit to his doctor:

[Г]осподин Голядкин... не зная, что далее делать, взял стул и сел. Но, вспомнив, что уселся без приглашения, тотчас же почувствовал свое неприличие и поспешил поправить ошибку свою в незнании света и хорошего тона, немедленно встав с занятого им без приглашения места. Потом, опомнившись и смутно заметив, что сделал две глупости разом, решился, нимало не медля, на третью, то есть попробовал было принести оправдание, пробормотал кое-что, улыбаясь, покраснел, сконфузился, выразительно замолчал и, наконец, сел окончательно.

Mr. Goliadkin. . . not knowing what to do next, took a chair and sat down. But, recollecting that he had sat down without being invited, he at once felt his impropriety and hastened to correct his error in ignorance of society and *bon ton* by immediately getting up from the seat he had occupied without being invited. Then, thinking better of it and dimly noting that he had done two stupid things at once, he ventured, without the least delay, upon a third, that is, he tried to excuse himself, murmured something, smiled, blushed, became embarrassed, fell into an expressive silence, and finally sat down definitively.<sup>263</sup>

<sup>261</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 147-48; *The Double*, 56.

<sup>262</sup> “O svetskikh obshchestvakh i khoroshem tone,” *Moskovskii telegraf* 1:2 (1825): 108-109. Italics in the original.

<sup>263</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 114-15; *The Double*, 10-11.

Here, Goliadkin's preoccupation with *bon ton* actually makes his behavior more awkward and results in extreme embarrassment that has physical symptoms such as muttering, abortive movements, blushing, and an inappropriate smile.

These are some of the key symptoms of embarrassment identified by the sociologist Erving Goffman in "Embarrassment and Social Organization."<sup>264</sup> For Goffman, embarrassment is fundamentally a matter of self-presentation. Whereas shame relates to who one is, and so can be felt even if the object of shame remains a secret, embarrassment relates to something that happens which disrupts the flow of face-to-face social interaction. Shame is moral, while embarrassment is social. The Russian words for embarrassment and shame, *smushchenie* and *styd*, respectively, do not correspond perfectly to their English equivalents, and while variants of *styd* occur more frequently in *The Double* than variants of *smushchenie*, the English "embarrassment" does a better job of rendering the feeling-tone of *The Double*. Goliadkin's primary concern throughout *Dvoinik* is self-presentation—not so much who he is as the impression he makes on others. In a quotation that seems especially well suited to capturing the embarrassing predicament in which Goliadkin finds himself in *The Double*, Goffman argues that embarrassment results when a person's multiple social selves encounter one another unexpectedly, producing a bad social tonality: "[E]veryday occasions of embarrassment arise when the self projected is somehow confronted with another self which, though valid in other contexts, cannot be here sustained in harmony with the first."<sup>265</sup> For Goffman as well as for Dostoevsky, embarrassment is a tonal dissonance produced by social interactions in a hierarchically stratified society: A key reason people project multiple selves is that they are expected to behave differently with people of higher or lower social positions. In *The Double*, Goliadkin is embarrassed when he is projecting a self of higher social position than he occupies at work and unexpectedly encounters his colleagues—as when his superior Andrei Phillipovich sees him riding in a carriage, or some young men from the office see him dressed in fine clothes at a café. But the most embarrassing thing that happens to Goliadkin is his encounter with his own double. When Golyadkin first sees the double, he experiences "*smushchenie*."<sup>266</sup> When the double comes to dinner at Goliadkin's house and asks for Goliadkin's patronage, both men are extremely embarrassed. Later in the novel, the double is described as Goliadkin's "shame" (*styd*).<sup>267</sup>

Goffman's theory of embarrassment helps us to account for the relationship between ambition and the peculiar affective register, or tone, of *The Double*. Dostoevsky is not only interested in where ambition leads the hero, he also explores how embarrassing ambition can be to those who either have it or witness it. Even without identifying with the hero or knowing what attitude to take in relation to his ambition, readers of *The Double* can experience the hero's embarrassment. This is because embarrassment is extremely contagious. As Goffman notes, when it comes to embarrassment, "ego boundaries seem especially weak."<sup>268</sup> As embarrassment is especially apt to spread, it not only permeates the text, but also exceeds the textual boundaries in the form of a feeling-tone that communicates itself to readers. If the embarrassing social tone

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<sup>264</sup> Erving Goffman, "Embarrassment and Social Organization," *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 62, Issue 3 (Nov., 1956): 264-271.

<sup>265</sup> Goffman, 269.

<sup>266</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 141; *The Double*, 48.

<sup>267</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 146; *The Double*, 55.

<sup>268</sup> Goffman, "Embarrassment," 265.

of Goliadkin's behavior results from both the blockage of his inappropriate ambition, and the disharmony of his social selves in a highly stratified society, the embarrassing literary tone of *The Double* results from the strange and disorienting encounter French literary models of ambition with Russian *ambitsiia*. As Dostoevsky and his hero Goliadkin reach after French plots and tones, they lead readers on an at times comical, at times nearly unbearable, unsettling yet fascinating affective journey.

Whereas clinical and Romantic treatments of mad ambition have their origin in a physiological understanding of ambition as a form of passion, Dostoevsky treats ambition as a psychological dilemma, as a dense cluster of related feelings and desires a person has regarding him or herself that are inextricably bound up both in large-scale social structures—such as class or estate hierarchies—and in everyday social interactions, which themselves may be aestheticized, in accordance with the ideal of behavioral tone, for example. Moreover, even as Dostoevsky uses *ambitsiia* to explore the social and cultural conditioning of the emotions, he also mobilizes it as an instrument of metaliterary play. In both *The Double* and “The Queen of Spades,” ambition forms part of a network of conflicting, culturally and socially conditioned feelings that push and pull characters' bodies in multiple directions. While these emotional movements may be seen as a corporeal manifestation of the idiosyncratic narrative movements of Russian ambition, they also register and contribute to the changing conceptualization of the emotions in the first half of the nineteenth century.

### Conclusion

As a longing to transcend one's current state, ambition involves a kind of displacement, a sense of being located outside a desired or desirable place and time. This displacement from the present, along with the projection of a future position to be reached, is what makes ambition an especially effective motor of plot. In this regard, one of the most notable features of “The Queen of Spades” and *The Double* is that in them, as in “The Diary of a Madman,” ambition *itself*, and not just the person who has it, is what seems out of place and time.

Although Pushkin's and Dostoevsky's ambition tales can be understood as uniquely Russian reworkings of French ambition narratives, a significant part of their “Russianness” is precisely their deep engagement with French literature and culture. As a strange hybrid of disparate social and affective structures, historical processes, and literary legacies, Russian tales of mad ambition are fascinating instances of the Franco-Russian literary exchange so central to the formation of nineteenth-century Russian prose. Whereas Stendhal and Balzac use ambition to structure plots that are purportedly typical of socio-historical processes underway in contemporary France, Pushkin and Dostoevsky make fantastic and metaliterary use of French and Russian social and economic discourse, blurring the lines between the European and the Russian, and between the social and the aesthetic. In “The Queen of Spades” and *The Double*, bourgeois French ambition haunts Russian literature like a ghost.

PART II

MONEY

## Chapter 3

Fantastic Counterfeiting:  
Money in Dostoevsky's *The Double*

[S]o that if they had been taken and placed next to each other, no one, decidedly no one, would have undertaken to determine precisely which was the real Goliadkin and which was the counterfeit, which was the old and which the new, which was the original and which the copy.

—Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 1846

One of the most striking differences between *The Double* and the French ambition plots from which it takes its departure is that Dostoevsky's ambitious hero never tries to make any money. Indeed, *The Double* is a tale of reckless spending: at the story's outset, the hero takes his savings of 750 rubles in *assignatsii* out of the back of a drawer, and over the course of the novel he fritters this money away. Funding Goliadkin's unceasing movements, money is not a goal in itself but a means to realize his ambition. This demotion of money from an object to an instrument of desire in Dostoevsky's story of social and psychological ruin testifies to the devaluation of Russian money itself in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Even as the expansion of commerce was making money increasingly important in social life, this period witnessed the collapse of the main unit of Russian currency and the release of multiple new forms of paper money. Along with the importation of foreign literary and cultural models that did not correspond to Russian social conditions, the circulation of unstable currencies helps to explain the proliferation of economically oriented narratives of madness and the supernatural in the 1830s-1840s.

Though many scholars have examined money in Dostoevsky's life and works, no one has accounted fully for its significance in *The Double*.<sup>269</sup> Moreover, while most accounts of money in Dostoevsky focus on the author's biography or social views, a new approach is needed to understand its role in his 1846 *Doppelgänger* tale. Russell Scott Valentino's wonderfully suggestive treatment of money in *The Double* invites further analysis. Exploring money's role in Dostoevsky's novel and in society as an instrument of both personal and collective fantasy,

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<sup>269</sup> The earliest significant study of money in Dostoevsky is that of Catteau, who shows that Dostoevsky's lifelong interest in money—evident in his fictional as well as journalistic writings—was deeply personal, as the author struggled to support himself by writing and also battled a gambling addiction for many years. Jacques Catteau, "Money" in *Dostoyevsky and the Process of Literary Creation*, trans. Audrey Littlewood (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989). In a more recent article, Todd sets Dostoevsky's attempts to make literature pay in the broader context of the rise of the professions in post-Emancipation Russia: Todd, "Dostoevskii as a Professional Writer." Other notable studies explore money in relation to Dostoevsky's Realism; his critique of self-interest; his religious views; and the temporal dynamics of plot. See Boris Christa, "Dostoevskii and Money," *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii*, 93-110; Sophie Ollivier, "Argent et Révolution dans *Les Démons*," *Dostoevsky Studies*, 5 (1984), 101-15; Susan McReynolds, *Redemption and the Merchant God: Dostoevsky's Economy of Salvation and Antisemitism* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2008); John Vernon, "On Borrowed Time" in *Money and Fiction: Literary Realism in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 108-41.

Valentino focuses on the moral implications of the spread of commercial culture in modernity.<sup>270</sup> In this chapter, I focus instead on the aesthetic implications of the unique material history of Russian money. Viewing *The Double* as an oblique response to the Imperial financial crisis and monetary reforms of 1839-1843, I suggest that the volatility of the Russian monetary sign aids the novel's fantastic flight from realist referentiality.<sup>271</sup> In *The Double*, money is a specter haunting Realism.

From the opening pages, money helps to generate the “fantastic coloring” (*fantasticheskii kolorit*) for which the contemporary critic Vissarion Belinsky famously faulted *The Double*.<sup>272</sup> The colorful description of the hero Goliadkin's cash provides the novel's first instance of doubling:

[H]а цыпочках подошел к столу, отпер в нем один ящик, пошарил в самом заднем уголку этого ящика, вынул, наконец, из-под старых пожелтевших бумаг и кой-какой дряни зеленый истертый бумажник, открыл его осторожно,—и бережно и с наслаждением заглянул в самый дальний, потаенный карман его. Вероятно, пачка зелененьких, сереньких, синеньких, красненьких и разных пестреньких бумажек тоже весьма приветливо и одобрительно глянула на господина Голядкина: с просиявшим лицом положил он перед собою на стол раскрытый бумажник и крепко потер руки в знак величайшего удовольствия. Наконец он вынул ее, свою утешительную пачку государственных ассигнаций, и, в сотый раз, впрочем считая со вчерашнего дня, начал пересчитывать их, тщательно перетирая каждый листок между большим и указательным пальцами. «Семьсот пятьдесят рублей ассигнациями!»—окончил он, наконец, полусшепотом.

[H]e tiptoed to the desk, unlocked one of the drawers, rummaged about in the hindmost corner of that drawer, finally took out a shabby green wallet from under some old yellow papers and trash, opened it warily, and peeked carefully and with delight into its remotest secret pocket. Probably a wad of green, gray, blue, red, and multicolored bits of paper also looked quite affably and approvingly at Mr. Goliadkin: with a beaming face he placed the opened wallet on the table before him and rubbed his hands energetically as a sign of the greatest pleasure. Finally he took it out, his comforting wad of banknotes, and for the hundredth time—that is, counting only from yesterday—began to re-count them,

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<sup>270</sup> Russell Scott Valentino, “What's a Person Worth: Character and Commerce in Dostoevskii's *Double*,” in *Literature. Vol. 2 of American Contributions to the 13th International Congress of Slavists, Ljubljana, August 2003*, ed. Robert Maguire and Alan Timberlake (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2003), 203-12.

<sup>271</sup> The basic method I employ in this chapter—identifying the economic paradigms that structure meaning and plot, and contextualizing those paradigms within economic history—is informed by the writings of Goux and Shell, the pioneers of New Economic Criticism. See Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies after Marx and Freud*; Goux, *The Coiners of Language*, trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature*.

<sup>272</sup> Belinsky's criticism of Dostoevsky's second novel includes the following programmatic statement on the untimeliness of fantastic literature in the 1840s: “But in *The Double* there is one other essential defect: that is its fantastic coloring. In our time the fantastic belongs only in madhouses, and not in literature, and should be under the direction of doctors, and not poets.” (*No v “Dvoynike” est’ eshche i drugoi sushchestvennyi nedostatok: eto ego fantasticheskii kolorit. Fantasticheskoe v nashe vremia mozhет imet’ mesto tol’ko v domakh umalishennykh, a ne v literature, i nakhodit’sia v zavedyvanii vrachei, a ne poetov.*) Vissarion Belinskii, “Vzgliad na russkuiu literaturu 1846 goda” (1847), *V. G. Belinskii. Polnoe Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1956), 10:41.

painstakingly rubbing each leaf between his thumb and index finger. “Seven hundred and fifty roubles in banknotes (*assignatsii*)!” he finished finally in a half-whisper.<sup>273</sup>

As Goliadkin looks at his bills, the narrator supposes that they look back at him, mirroring his expression and sentiment: “Probably a wad of . . . bits of paper also looked quite affably and approvingly at Mr. Goliadkin.” Reflecting the image of the hero, the bills double him. Furthermore, the narrator’s uncertainty as to whether the bills actually look at the hero, observable in the qualification, “probably,” is an early indication of money’s role in the production of fantastic uncertainty: like the double, whose existence outside the deranged mind of the hero is never definitively affirmed nor denied by the narrator,<sup>274</sup> money resists narrative objectification.

The material history of Russian money may help to explain Dostoevsky’s association of money with doubling: in the first half of the nineteenth century, the monetary system was plagued by unwanted doubles. Beginning with Catherine II’s introduction of the paper *assignatsiia* (assignment) in 1769 and continuing through the first decades of the nineteenth century, the government financed wars and paid debts by repeatedly issuing more paper money than it could back with precious metals in the treasury.<sup>275</sup> This practice caused high inflation and led to the establishment of two monetary standards—the silver rouble and the *assignatsiia*. According to this double standard, the nominal worth of the paper rouble was much higher than its worth in silver.<sup>276</sup> For instance, a one-rouble *assignatsiia* was worth just 27½ kopecks in silver from 1833 to 1843.<sup>277</sup> As though taking inspiration from the government’s assertion that its paper was more valuable than it was, counterfeiters issued a great number of illegal *assignatsii*, further undermining the value of the original bills.<sup>278</sup> Nevertheless, the *assignatsiia* was officially the main unit of currency, and the government used it to pay salaries and other domestic expenses, reserving silver mostly for foreign payments. Thus, the main unit of currency in this period—the *assignatsiia*—was a conspicuously fictional text whose inflated value was rendered

<sup>273</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 110; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 4, translation modified.

<sup>274</sup> Though Goliadkin’s obvious mental instability suggests that the double may be the product of his mad imagination, Dostoevsky leaves room for the interpretation that the double does exist outside the hero’s mind. The most powerful evidence that the double is not simply a hallucination is the fact that Goliadkin’s immediate supervisor, Anton Antonovich, acknowledges the double’s presence as well as his striking resemblance to Goliadkin. *Dvoinik*, 148; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 57.

<sup>275</sup> “Assignatsiia,” *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’* (St. Petersburg: I. A. Efron, 1890), 317.

<sup>276</sup> Dostoevsky also demonstrates his interest in this double-monetary standard in his first work, *Bednye liudi* (*Poor Folk*). In order to buy a collection of Pushkin’s works for young Pokrovsky, Varenka bargains with a huckster at Gostiny Dvor. Varenka explains that her thirty rubles in *assignatsii* are not enough to meet the price of ten silver rubles: “I got the merchant to the point that he took down the price and limited what he asked to only ten silver rubles. How happy I was to bargain! . . . But how awful! My whole capital consisted of thirty rubles in *assignatsii*, and the merchant would in no way agree to lower the price further.” (*Ia*] *dovela kuptsa do togo, chto on sbavil tsenu i ogranichil svoi trebovaniia tol’ko desiat’iu rubliami serebrom. Kak veselo mne bylo torgovat’sia! . . . No uzhas! Ves’ moi kapital byl v tridtsat’ rublei assignatsiiami, a kupets nikak ne soglashedsia ustupit’ deshevle.*) Dostoevskii, *Bednye liudi*, 40. Eventually, the huckster does lower his price further, and old Pokrovsky contributes a few coins to Varenka’s bills, enabling the purchase. Whereas Varenka’s negotiation of various forms of currency is part of a sentimental scene of selfless generosity, in *The Double* the plurality of monies is a fantastic affair. This discrepancy highlights the promiscuity of the monetary sign: its literary significance is affected by material history to a great extent, but is also shaped by the standards of value current in a given genre or text.

<sup>277</sup> Mikhail Kashkarov, *Denezhnoe obrashchenie v Rossii: Istoriko-statisticheskoe izsledovanie* (St. Petersburg: Gos. tip., 1898), 1:26.

<sup>278</sup> “Assignatsiia,” 318.

all the more suspect by the circulation of its more and less valuable doubles: the silver ruble and the counterfeit.

The Imperial financial reforms of 1839-1843, which took place during Dostoevsky's first decade in Petersburg, sought to eliminate these doubles.<sup>279</sup> Establishing the silver ruble as the sole monetary standard, the government declared the *assignatsiia* worthless, and the hundreds of thousands of *assignatsii* in circulation were recalled and destroyed. Issuing various new forms of paper money during the reform years, the government eventually settled on the *kreditnyi bilet* (credit bill) as the primary replacement for the *assignatsiia*. Although the *kreditnyi bilet* was tied to the silver ruble and was meant to be redeemable for it at an equal exchange rate (a situation that lasted only until the Crimean War again prompted the government to issue more paper money than it could back with silver), and although improved design techniques were implemented to make the new bills more difficult to counterfeit (an effort that did not prove as successful as had been hoped), the reforms actually highlighted the unstable and uncertain value of Russian money.<sup>280</sup> According to the economic historian Walter McKenzie Pintner, the financial crisis and the resulting reforms were the economic issues most widely and publicly discussed during Nicholas I's reign. While the government was better able to conceal other problems—such as the large debts it carried—the transition to a new currency was a tangible reality for Russian subjects. Moreover, as both the Czar and the minister of finance, E. F. Kankrin, were aware, there was an important psychological element of the reforms: the success of the new currency depended to a large extent on public trust.<sup>281</sup> This meant that the reforms could not be carried out without a certain amount of official public discussion.

Even before the reforms took place, the currency problems were the subject of unofficial discussion in the periodical press. As an 1839 article by D. Shelekhov in the *Library for Reading (Biblioteka dlia chteniia)* suggests, however, there was little room for overt complaints about the complications arising from multiple monetary standards and forms of currency. Despite the fact that his article treats an especially problematic aspect of the monetary system—namely, the unofficial regional variations in the rates of exchange between paper and metal money, which led to much confusion and fraud and finally helped stimulate the reforms—Shelekhov opens with a grandiose claim about the system's perfection: “Our financial system, thanks to the experienced wisdom of the venerable director of finances, has been brought to the utmost perfection” (*Nasha finansovaia sistema, blagodaria opytnoi mudrosti mastitogo rasporiaditelia finansami, dovedena do vysokogo sovershenstva*).<sup>282</sup> Carefully paying lip service to a monetary system on the verge of collapse, Shelekhov echoes the false claims of value printed on Russian paper money. By contrast, writing his memoirs from the comforting remoteness of the 1880s, the entrepreneur Vasilii Kokorev describes the years of currency reform as a time of discursive as well as economic uncertainty. Recalling that he and his friends had viewed the reforms with fear and suspicion, Kokorev notes that the “rumor” that the silver ruble would become the main monetary standard “upset everyone” (*Slukh etot trevozhil vsekh*). At first, people worried that the price of

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<sup>279</sup> Kashkarov provides detailed analysis of the 1839-1843 financial reforms in *Denezhnoe obrashchenie*. For a comprehensive analysis in English, see Pintner, *Russian Economic Policy*. For a discussion of anti-counterfeiting techniques, and for images of Russian paper money before, during, and after the reforms, see A. E. Mikhaelis and L. A. Kharlamov, *Bumazhnye den'gi v Rossii* (Perm': Permskaia pechatnaia fabrika Goznaka, 1993).

<sup>280</sup> Mikhaelis and Kharlamov, *Bumazhnye den'gi*, 13.

<sup>281</sup> Pintner, *Russian Economic Policy*, 185-86, 256; Kashkarov, *Denezhnoe obrashchenie*, 63.

<sup>282</sup> Pintner, *Russian Economic Policy*, 256; D. Shelekhov, “O lazhe, ili promene na den'gi. I o vliianii lazha na sel'skuiu promyshlennost',” *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* 33, no. 4 (1839): 41-56, 41.

goods would skyrocket. Then, Kokorev and his friends even heard that the switch to the silver standard might be a Polish conspiracy to destroy Russian finances.

The economic uncertainty resulting from the Imperial financial reforms contributes to the epistemological uncertainty that permeates *The Double*. According to Todorov's classic definition, the reader of a fantastic tale is confronted with apparently supernatural events and is never able to decide whether the text affirms or denies their existence: "The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty."<sup>283</sup> In 1845, the year Dostoevsky wrote *The Double*, private citizens began exchanging their old *assignatsii* for the new *kreditnye biletu*, and over half of the *assignatsii* in circulation in January were retired by December.<sup>284</sup> In this year, the public literally had a hand in the financial reforms—handing in their old bills for new ones. This would have brought the monetary crisis to the forefront of the public imagination, raising questions about the validity of government tender. *The Double* emerges from this period of economic uncertainty.<sup>285</sup>

As both the narrator and the hero lavish attention on Goliadkin's stockpile of cash, *The Double* begins with an image of wealth and a promise of exchange. For a titular councilor like Goliadkin, 750 rubles in *assignatsii* would have been a significant amount of money.<sup>286</sup> His possession of such a sum certainly sets him apart from the similarly-ranked but impoverished heroes of Nikolai Gogol's story "The Overcoat" ("Shinel'," 1842) and Dostoevsky's first novel, *Poor Folk* (*Bednye liudi*, 1846). Unlike the stories of Akaky Akakievich and Makar Devushkin, Goliadkin's tale begins with a store of money rather than a lack of it. Although Goliadkin's manner of handling his money at first implies that he is a miser,<sup>287</sup> *The Double* is in fact a tale of spending rather than saving. Goliadkin takes his money out not just to fondle and continue hoarding it, but to use it. Indeed, this store of wealth funds the progression of much of the plot, and by the novel's end it has been dissipated in tandem with the dissolution of the hero's personality. The promise of value the hero's *assignatsii* offer is ultimately replaced by the threat of counterfeiting.

Goliadkin uses money as a tool of self-representation, and this practice is intimately linked to the novel's central phenomenon of doubling.<sup>288</sup> The description of Goliadkin's bills as

<sup>283</sup> Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 25.

<sup>284</sup> Kashkarov, *Denezhnoe obrashchenie*, 71.

<sup>285</sup> V. A. Kokorev, *Ekonomicheskie provaly po vospominaniiam s 1837 goda* (Moscow: Izdatel'skii dom "Ekonomicheskaia gazeta," 2002), 37, 39.

<sup>286</sup> According to Mironov, in the first half of the nineteenth century a typical family could live a noble lifestyle in the capital on an annual income of 450-800 silver rubles. Mironov, *Sotsial'naia istoriia*, 87. Factoring in the exchange rate between the silver ruble and the *assignatsiia* in the 1840s (with 450 silver rubles equaling 1636 rubles *assignatsii*), it appears that Goliadkin's savings would be enough to support such a family for several months. Also confirming the respectability of Goliadkin's savings is the example of the hero in Gogol's 1842 story "Shinel'" ("The Overcoat"): Akaky Akakievich has the same rank in the civil service as Goliadkin and makes around 400 rubles per year. Nikolai Gogol, "Shinel'," *SS*, 3:121. Though Gogol does not specify the type of currency Akaky receives, the establishment of the silver ruble as the unit of currency used for government salaries after 1840 suggests that Gogol has silver rubles in mind. Kashkarov, *Denezhnoe obrashchenie*, 57. Again factoring in the silver to paper exchange rate, it can be estimated that Akaky Akakievich makes about 1455 *assignatsii*—not quite twice the amount of Goliadkin's savings—per year. If Gogol's story is a roughly accurate indication of what titular councilors could live upon—albeit without much extra money for new coats—then it seems Goliadkin's 750 rubles *assignatsii* would be enough to support him for about six months.

<sup>287</sup> The pleasure Goliadkin takes in looking at the bills and especially his gesture of rubbing his hands together are important elements of the classic portrait of the miser. That Goliadkin counts his money "for the hundredth time... painstakingly rubbing each leaf between his thumb and index finger," reinforces this suggestion of miserliness.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. Valentino 202, 208-09.

a kind of mirror in which he is pleased to see his own reflection hints at his intention to purchase a new self-image. Indeed, by enabling him to don fancy clothes and new boots, dress his servant in a rented livery, and hire a carriage, money transforms Goliadkin into another version of himself.<sup>289</sup> Wielding money as a kind of doubling agent, Goliadkin distances himself from the initial characterization of him the narrator offers. While the narrator's initial description of Goliadkin and his apartment suggest that Goliadkin is the kind of petty clerk typical of the Russian Natural School, money affords Goliadkin's escape (by hired carriage) from the apartment and the genre that typify him.<sup>290</sup> Parading down Nevsky in uncharacteristically high style, Goliadkin performs the splitting of his subjectivity that later manifests itself in the appearance of the double: it is his effective use of money to re-present himself that allows him to conceive of claiming that he is someone other than he is, saying, "[I]t's not me at all, not me, and that's that" (*Eto vovse ne ia, ne ia, da i tol'ko*).<sup>291</sup> Using money to bring a new version of himself into being, Goliadkin places the plot of *The Double* on a fantastic rather than a realist course.

Writing *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* just a year before Dostoevsky composed *The Double*, Karl Marx also treated money's purchasing power in terms of self-multiplication: "That which is for me through the medium of *money*—that for which I can pay (i.e., which money can buy)—that am I, the possessor of the money."<sup>292</sup> In this formulation, money is a representative of all its owner's abstract, potential selves, or doubles. Moreover, because it not only represents potential selves, but can actually bring them into material being, Marx sees money as a frightening magical agent: "[M]oney transforms the *real essential powers of man and nature* into . . . tormenting chimeras—just as it transforms *real imperfections and chimeras* . . . which exist only in the imagination of the individual—into *real powers and faculties*."<sup>293</sup> Dostoevsky was certainly not familiar with Marx's *Manuscripts*, which were published only in the twentieth century. However, the rhetoric Marx uses in his description of money as that which turns reality into "chimeras" and "chimeras" into reality is a useful reminder of money's dark role in the literature of the fantastic. From Mephistopheles' printing of paper currency in Part II of *Faust* (a work Marx references in the *Manuscripts*) to the frequent deals with the Devil in European and Russian Romanticism, money is often associated with the supernatural and the demonic.<sup>294</sup> In their early works, and in specific connection with money's powers of self-representation, both Marx and Dostoevsky drew on the correlation between money and the fantastic. But whereas Marx's invocation of the chimerical power of money formed part of his evolving theory of capitalist alienation, Dostoevsky's sense of the fantastical is rooted in the life of Russia's capital city, whose very existence proved a challenge to literary representation.

Money serves Goliadkin as a means of movement as well as self-transformation. Thrilled

<sup>289</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 111; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 5-6.

<sup>290</sup> For a detailed account of Dostoevsky's incorporation of typical Natural School elements in *The Double*, see V[iktor] V[ladimirovich] Vinogradov, "Evolutsiia russkogo naturalizma," *Poetika russkoi literatury. Izbrannye trudy* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1976). Aleksandr Tseitlin offers an even more detailed history of the tradition of petty clerk tales in the 1830s-1840s and Dostoevsky's engagement with that tradition in *Povesti o bednom chinovnike Dostoevskogo (k istorii odnogo siuzheta)*, (Moscow: n.p., 1923).

<sup>291</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 113; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 8.

<sup>292</sup> Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), 104, emphasis in the original.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 105, emphasis in the original.

<sup>294</sup> Notable Russian examples include Zhukovsky's poem "Twelve Sleeping Maidens" ("Dvenadtsat' spiashchikh dev," 1817) and Gogol's story "The Portrait" ("Portret," 1835).

by the impressive quantity of his savings, he describes it as a sum that “can take a man far” (*mozhet daleko povesti cheloveka*).<sup>295</sup> Indeed, the first thing Goliadkin pays for in the novel is a vehicle. For twenty-five rubles, his hired carriage takes him to a series of places that function as stages in the development of a narrative of mental disintegration and social isolation: to Nevsky Prospect, where—as mentioned above—he invokes the double; on a sudden detour to his doctor’s home, where his sanity is put in question; on a mock-shopping spree at Gostiny Dvor, where his strange use of money makes him appear both irrational and dishonest; back to Nevsky, where he is mocked by his acquaintances in a restaurant; to Olsufii Ivanovich’s house, where he is refused entrance and disgraced; back toward home; back toward Olsufii Ivanovich’s; away from Olsufii Ivanovich’s again and finally to a restaurant where he pays and dismisses the cabby.<sup>296</sup> Enabling the erratic and increasingly frenzied movements that demonstrate his psychological breakdown, the money Goliadkin uses to hire the carriage drives the narrative on a path of fits and starts.<sup>297</sup>

After the appearance of the double, Goliadkin’s hurried quest for self-justification necessitates further spending on transportation. Taking cabs “so as not to lose time” (*chtob vremeni ne teriat*), Goliadkin pays for the rapid advancement of the plot.<sup>298</sup> His spending becomes increasingly prodigal and irrational. He pays cabbies to wait for him only to dismiss them without taking rides, giving one driver extra money “even quite willingly” (*dazhe s bol’shoiu okhotoiu*).<sup>299</sup> At one point the narrator comments on Goliadkin’s unusually spendthrift behavior: “Mr. Goliadkin had somehow become extraordinarily generous” (*gospodin Goliadkin stal kak-to neobykovenno shchedr*).<sup>300</sup> Goliadkin is not only willing to pay but is also careful to do so. Even after he shares a wild ride with the double in a cab the double hired, and out of which the double tries to throw him, Goliadkin dutifully pays the driver before rushing off to chase his nemesis on foot: “Not forgetting to pay the cabby, Mr. Goliadkin rushed out to the street” (*Ne zabyv rasplatit’sia s izvozchikom, brosilsia gospodin Goliadkin na ulitsu*).<sup>301</sup> The narrator reproduces the meticulousness of Goliadkin’s prodigality by carefully recording all his payments, each of which serves to keep the narrative moving in a multitude of directions.

Despite his unceasing movements and prodigal spending, Goliadkin does not reach a final destination or buy anything of tangible value by the novel’s end. In this regard, both his movements and his spending are analogous to his speech. Characterized by stuttering and ineffective circumlocution, Goliadkin’s speech continuously sidesteps meaning only to arrive back where it began. To put this in economic terms, Goliadkin squanders his words, spending them unwisely and getting little or nothing (in terms of being understood by his interlocutor) in return.<sup>302</sup> This is particularly true of his attempts to assert his own worth, as in his first conversation with his doctor:

<sup>295</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 110; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 4, translation modified.

<sup>296</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 112-28; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 6-29.

<sup>297</sup> Vinogradov discusses the speed, continual interruption, and uncertain purpose of Goliadkin’s movements, but he does not mention money’s role in helping the hero get around. “Evoliutsiia russkogo naturalizma,” 109-16.

<sup>298</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 170; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 88.

<sup>299</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 223, 171; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 161, 90.

<sup>300</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 177; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 97.

<sup>301</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 206; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 137.

<sup>302</sup> Early critics of *The Double* faulted Dostoevsky for a similar tendency to squander language. For instance, Belinsky criticizes the young author for his “terrible ineptitude in controlling and economically distributing his surplus of capabilities” (*strashnoe neumenie vladet’ i rasporiiazhat’sia ekonomicheskii izbytkom sobstvennykh sil*). “Vzgliad na russkuiu literaturu,” 40.

—Я говорю, чтоб вы меня извинили, Крестьян Иванович, в том, что я, сколько мне кажется, не мастер красно говорить, —сказал господин Голядкин полуубиженным тоном, немного сбиваясь и путаясь. —В этом отношении я, Крестьян Иванович, не так, как другие, —прибавил он с какою-то особенною улыбкою, —и много говорить не умею; придавать слогу красоту не учился. Зато я, Крестьян Иванович, действую; зато я действую, Крестьян Иванович!

“I was saying, excuse me, Krestyan Ivanovich, for the fact that I, as it seems to me, am no master of fine speaking,” Mr. Goliadkin said in a half-offended tone, slightly confused and thrown off. “In this respect, Krestyan Ivanovich, I am not like others,” he added with some special smile, “I am unable to speak at length; I never learnt to embellish my style. Instead, Krestyan Ivanovich, I work; I work instead, Krestyan Ivanovich!”<sup>303</sup>

Continually interrupting himself with qualifications and repetitions, and spending more words on the subject of his inability to express himself than he does on actual self-expression, Goliadkin says little of substance in this passage. Moreover, what he does manage to say is not true. His stumbling speech contradicts the only positive statement he makes—i.e. his puzzling claim to functionality in the phrase, “I work” (*ia deistvuiu*).

Goliadkin’s speech does not “work” at all. Whatever he intends to convey about himself in this passage remains obscure to his interlocutor:

—Гм... Как же это... вы действуете? —отозвался Крестьян Иванович. Затем, на минутку, последовало молчание. Доктор как-то странно и недоверчиво взглянул на господина Голядкина. Господин Голядкин тоже в свою очередь довольно недоверчиво покосился на доктора.

“Hm... How is it... that you work?” Krestyan Ivanovich rejoined. After which, silence ensued for a moment. The doctor gave Mr. Goliadkin a strange, mistrustful look. Mr. Goliadkin, in his turn, also gave the doctor a rather mistrustful sidelong glance.<sup>304</sup>

Desiring to explain why he is no less worthy for being inarticulate, Goliadkin succeeds only in provoking Krestyan Ivanovich’s suspicion and uncertainty. The association of Goliadkin and his speech with money of dubious value is unexpectedly confirmed by the multiple meanings of the word *deistvovat’*— meaning to work, function, act, be valid. This verb can also refer to the validity of a bill, ticket or token. Goliadkin’s claim to “work” echoes a similar one made by the watermark on the Russian *assignatsii* printed from 1769-1817: “Love for the fatherland / Works to its [i.e. the fatherland’s] advantage” (*Liubov’ k otechestvu / Deistvuet k pol’ze onogo*).<sup>305</sup> Like the *assignatsii*, devalued by their own proliferation, Goliadkin’s words are great in number but poor in meaning, and they both make and undercut a claim to value.

The shared functions of Goliadkin’s prodigal spending and speaking—that of simultaneously making and undercutting claims of value—are the bases of the analogy *The*

<sup>303</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoynik*, 116; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 12, translation modified.

<sup>304</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoynik*, 116; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 12-13, translation modified.

<sup>305</sup> See color photos and descriptions of Russian *assignatsii* in Mikhaelis and Kharlamov, *Bumanzhnye den’gi*, unnumbered pages.

*Double* posits between money and language. Receiving clearer elaboration later in the novel, this analogy already suggests itself in the opening description of Goliadkin's 750 rubles *assignatsii*. First of all, the very word *assignatsiia* exhibits the semiotic character of money, deriving as it does from the Latin *signum*. Second, the transitional character of Russian money in the 1840s, when all *assignatsii* were recalled and replaced by *kreditnye bilet*y, makes the *assignatsiia* an apt representative of signs whose relationships to their referents are unstable and uncertain. The transitional character of Russian money is evident in the colorful description of Goliadkin's bills as "green, gray, blue, red," and "multicolored" (*pestren'kikh*) Historically, there were red and blue (as well as white and beige) *assignatsii*, but there were no grey, green, or properly "multicolored" bills of this kind.<sup>306</sup> Here, the narrator gives a more accurate description of the bills that replaced the *assignatsii*—the *kreditnye bilet*y—which were in fact issued in each of the colors cited.<sup>307</sup> Thus, Goliadkin's money appears in hybrid form: it has an old name and a new look. While the old name—*assignatsiia*—is a recently retracted sign of value, the new sign—*kreditnyi bilet*—has yet to acquire a stable place in the public lexicon. Coming right at the beginning of *The Double*, this colorful discrepancy between the name stated and the thing named is the first of many instances in which a lingering uncertainty about the kind and value of money raises questions about the referential value of language.

Comparisons of money to language have a long history in Western thought: they have been articulated variously by thinkers from Plato to recent New Economic critics like Jean-Joseph Goux and Marc Shell.<sup>308</sup> A particularly well-known example is Saussure's comparison of monetary and linguistic "value":

[I]t is not the metal in a piece of money that fixes its value. A coin nominally worth five francs may contain less than half its worth of silver. Its value will vary according to the amount stamped upon it and according to its use inside or outside a political boundary. This is even more true of the linguistic signifier, which is not phonic but incorporeal—constituted not by its material substance but by the differences that separate its sound-image from all others.<sup>309</sup>

Saussure draws this analogy between monetary and linguistic value (which in the linguistic case refers to meaning) in order to explain that linguistic signs are *differential*, i.e. that they acquire meaning only in relation to other signs. His comparison of the linguistic sign to a coin also reinforces his assertion that the former is *arbitrary*. Like a coin, a linguistic sign represents something (i.e. a concept) that is not inherent to it, but is rather assigned to it by social convention.

For Saussure as for Dostoevsky, the analogy between monetary and linguistic signs challenges the idea that words refer directly to preexisting things. Asserting that language is "a system of pure values," Saussure does not include a referent in his model of the linguistic sign,

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> The *kreditnye bilet*y were printed as follows: one ruble—yellow; three rubles—green; five rubles—blue; ten rubles—red; twenty-five rubles—violet; fifty rubles—grey; and one hundred rubles—brown, with a multicolored stamp on the back side. See Mikhaelis and Kharlamov, *Bumazhnye den'gi*.

<sup>308</sup> For a brief history of the analogy between language and money in the Western philosophical tradition, see Goux's *Symbolic Economies*, 96-111. For a survey of New Economic treatments of this subject, see Woodmansee and Osteen, 13-21.

<sup>309</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 118.

which consists only of a “sound-image” (signifier) and a “concept” (signified). Anticipating Saussure’s destabilization of linguistic referentiality by more than a half-century, Dostoevsky wrote *The Double* as though against the emerging aesthetics of Realism, the contemporary critical formulations of which presupposed a direct correspondence between signs and referents.<sup>310</sup> While Saussure compares the linguistic sign to a coin, Dostoevsky likens language to paper money. Paper money in particular exemplifies the arbitrariness and conventionality of signs. If coins have value as commodities made (at least partially) of precious metals, paper money conspicuously lacks inherent value. Moreover, in its increased vulnerability to counterfeiting, paper money is a text of suspect, fragile value that embodies the generalized anxieties of duplication in *The Double*. Associating paper money with false promises and speech-conjured phantoms, Dostoevsky highlights the fiction-producing power money and language share.

On a mock-shopping spree at Gostiny Dvor, Goliadkin uses paper money and lies to misrepresent himself as a wealthy man. In one example, Goliadkin exchanges his large bills for small ones in order to make his purse look fuller:

Мимоходом забежал он в меняльную лавочку и разменял всю свою крупную бумагу на мелкую, и хотя потерял на промене, но зато все-таки разменял, и бумажник его значительно потолстел, что, повидимому, доставило ему крайнее удовольствие.

On the way he dashed into the moneychanger’s shop and broke all his big notes into smaller ones, and though he lost in the exchange, he broke them all the same, and his wallet grew significantly fatter, which apparently afforded him great pleasure.<sup>311</sup>

Goliadkin’s use of money here is extremely strange: he pays for nothing other than the physical semblance of wealth, even as the proliferation of bills results in a loss rather than a gain of value. As when he finds his own reflection in his money at the start of the novel, Goliadkin here experiences “great pleasure” looking at his bills, showing that he prizes them more for their power to represent him than for their purchasing power (i.e. their power to represent exchange value). On the one hand, this instance of monetary inflation corroborates Goliadkin’s misrepresentation of self: like the government’s repeated expansion of the money supply, which devalued the *assignatsii* throughout the early nineteenth century, Goliadkin’s artful manipulation of monetary signs undermines the truth-value of his self-representation. On the other hand, Goliadkin’s actions demonstrate both the fiction-producing potential of all signs of value, and the “great pleasure” such fictions may afford.

In addition to this visual act of deception, Goliadkin commits several verbal ones at *Gostiny Dvor*. First, he visits a shop of gold and silver wares. He inquires about the price of goods, bargains with the salesman, and presents himself as having more money than readers know he actually has:

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<sup>310</sup> Often cited as programmatic statements of the new realist—or Natural School—aesthetic, Belinsky’s enthusiastic reviews of *Poor Folk* demonstrate faith in language’s ability to represent life as it “truly” is. Belinsky repeatedly lauds *Poor Folk* for its truthfulness: “everything is so simple, natural, truthful and true!” (*vse tak prosto, estestvenno, istinno i verno!*). V. G. Belinskii, “Peterburgskii sbornik” (1846), *Polnoe Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1956), 9:549.

<sup>311</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 122; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 20.

Сторговав полный обеденный и чайный сервиз с лишком на тысячу пятьсот рублей ассигнациями и выторговав себе в эту сумму затейливой формы сигарочницу и полный серебряный прибор для бритья бороды, приценившись, наконец, еще к кое-каким в своем роде полезным и приятным вещицам, господин Голядкин кончил тем, что обещал завтра же зайти непременно или даже сегодня прислать за сторгованным, взял номер лавки и, выслушав внимательно купца, хлопотавшего о задаточке, обещал в свое время и задаточек.

Having agreed on a price of fifteen hundred in banknotes for a full dinner and tea service, and bargained his way into a whimsically shaped cigar box and a full silver shaving kit for the same price, having inquired, finally, about the price of certain other little objects, useful and agreeable in their way, Mr. Goliadkin ended by promising to stop by for his purchases without fail the next day or even send for them that same day, took the number of the shop, listened attentively to the merchant, who was fussing about a little deposit, and promised to give him a little deposit in due time.<sup>312</sup>

Here, Goliadkin puts on an elaborate show of purchasing power, but does not buy anything. Despite his “promising to stop by for his purchases without fail the next day or even send for them that same day,” it is clear that he will not actually return: readers know he has just 750 rubles. By claiming to be able to buy gold and silver he cannot actually afford with his paper money, Goliadkin issues false promises of convertibility like those printed on the *assignatsiia*: both Goliadkin and the *assignatsiia* claim to be worth more precious metal than they are.

Goliadkin continues to issue false promises to pay in the other shops he visits. He bargains for goods, such as “various women’s materials,” that a bachelor preparing to get married might need:

Наконец, остановился он в магазине разных дамских материй. Наторговав опять на знатную сумму, господин Голядкин и здесь обещал купцу зайти непременно, взял номер лавки и, на вопрос о задаточке, опять повторил, что будет в свое время и задаточек. Потом посетил и еще несколько лавок; во всех торговал, приценился к разным вещицам, спорил долго с купцами, уходил из лавки и раза по три возвращался,—одним словом, оказывал необыкновенную деятельность.

Finally, he stopped at a store selling various ladies’ materials. Again negotiating purchases for a significant sum, Mr. Goliadkin, here as well, promised the merchant to stop by without fail, took the number of the shop, and, to the question about a little deposit, again repeated that there would be a little deposit in due time. Then he visited several other shops; in all of them he bargained, asked the price of various objects, sometimes argued for a long time with the merchants, left the shop and came back three times—in short, manifested an extraordinary activity.<sup>313</sup>

As Goliadkin pretends to shop for “ladies materials,” this passage hints at the novel’s thwarted love story. Whether Goliadkin is trying to seem like a wealthy lady’s suitor, or whether he

<sup>312</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 122; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 20.

<sup>313</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 122-23; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 21-22, translation modified.

actually believes himself to be one, no bride materializes for him in the novel. Instead, the mock-shopping spree at *Gostiny Dvor* serves as a long preface to Goliadkin's disastrous appearance at the party for Klara Olsuf'evna. While Goliadkin would like to be her suitor, marriage is an exchange he is never able to make, a promise the novel refuses to honor. Similarly, while Goliadkin's words make a claim on "materials," their relationship to the said materials is a conspicuous fiction. Though he does make frequent small expenditures (he mostly pays for articles of clothing, snacks at fashionable restaurants, and transportation), his false promises to pay are just as frequent.

The transition to a new form of paper currency in the 1840s made plain the promissory character of paper money. The text of the Russian *assignatsiia* printed between 1818-1843 reads as follows: "To the bearer of this government *assignatsiia* the Assignment Bank will pay one hundred rubles in current coin" (*Ob'iavitel'iu sei gosudarstvennoi assignatsii platit assignatsionnyi bank sto rublei khodiacheiu monetoiu*).<sup>314</sup> Though supposedly the *assignatsii* could be redeemed for "current [specifically, copper] coin," over the years the bills ceased to be convertible.<sup>315</sup> Thus, the promise that *assignatsii* could be traded for coins would not have inspired the confidence the government hoped to give its subjects when it reworded the promise of convertibility on the new, silver-backed *kreditnyi bilet*: "The Treasury Offices of Saint Petersburg and Moscow, and also the Lending Bank, give for this bill, quickly upon its presentation, fifty rubles in silver coin" (*Sokhranye Kazny, S. P. Burgskaia i Moskovskaia, ravno i Zaemnyi Bank, vydaiut po semu biletu, nemedlenno po priavlenii ego, piat'desiat rublei serebrianoiu monetoiu*).<sup>316</sup> Here, the government makes the more specific promise to exchange the bills for an equal amount of silver. If the name of the old currency—the *assignatsiia*—exhibits the semiotic character of money, the name of the new currency—the *kreditnyi bilet*—points to the credibility the government hoped it would inspire.

The currency reforms find a telling correspondence in Dostoevskii's treatment of Goliadkin's prolonged crisis of credibility: the hero's false promises to pay mimic the suspect claims of paper money. False promises are in fact a chronic feature of Goliadkin's personality. When he visits his doctor on the way to *Gostiny Dvor*, he alludes to gossip circulating among his colleagues that he failed to fulfill a promise to marry his former landlady, Karolina Ivanovna:

—Распустили они слух, что он уже дал подписку жениться, что он уже жених с другой стороны... И как бы вы думали, Крестьян Иванович, на ком?

—Право?

—На кухмистерше, на одной неблагопристойной немке, у которой обеда берет; вместо заплаты долгов руку ей предлагает.

"They've spread a rumor that he has already signed an agreement to marry, that he's already engaged elsewhere... And to whom do you think, Krestyan Ivanovich?"

"Really?"

"To a cookshop owner, an indecent German woman, from whom he buys his dinners; instead of paying his debts he's offering her his hand."<sup>317</sup>

<sup>314</sup> Mikhaelis and Kharlamov, *Bumazhnye den'gi*.

<sup>315</sup> "Assignatsiia" 317.

<sup>316</sup> Mikhaelis and Kharlamov, *Bumazhnye den'gi*.

<sup>317</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 121; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 19.

Goliadkin speaks of himself in the third person so as to distance himself from this rumor that he has “signed an agreement (*podpisku*) to marry” in lieu of “paying his debts.” Here again, Goliadkin’s false promises are linked to the question of paper’s value. Though he denies ever having issued it, references to Goliadkin’s paper promise to pay Karolina Ivanovna by marrying her return like a refrain throughout the novel, undermining the truth-value of his words.

Goliadkin’s false promises lead others to call him a counterfeiter of speech. Referring to Goliadkin’s promise to marry Karolina Ivanovna, Vakhrameev says Goliadkin is one of those people whose “words are counterfeit” (*slova ikh—fal’sh*) and whose “well-meaning appearance is suspicious (*blagonamerennyi vid podozritelen*).<sup>318</sup> Since Vakhrameev loses faith in Goliadkin’s promises, he demands immediate repayment of a debt Goliadkin has long owed him:

[П]рошу вас, милостивый государь мой, немедленно по получении сего откровенного письма моего, выслать следующие мне два целковых за бритвы иностранной работы, проданные мною, если запомнить изволите, семь месяцев тому назад в долг.

I ask you, my dear sir, immediately upon receipt of this frank letter of mine, to send me the two roubles owing to me for the razors of foreign workmanship that I sold you, if you will kindly remember, seven months ago on credit.<sup>319</sup>

Vakhrameev’s demand that Goliadkin repay two silver rubles challenges the latter to prove that his words are convertible to a tangible value. However, in his response to Vakhrameev’s accusatory letter, Goliadkin simply puts off payment of his debt to some unknown future date: “In conclusion I will say that I consider it my sacred duty to repay the debt you mentioned, two silver roubles, in its entirety” (*V zakliuchenie skazhu, chto vami oznachennyi dolg moi, dva rublia serebrom, pochtu sviatoiu obiazannostiu vozvratit’ vam vo vsei ego tselosti*).<sup>320</sup> Like the Russian *assignatsiia*, Goliadkin’s written response is but a paper representation of value and a deferral of debt.

Of course, the greatest threat to Goliadkin’s reputation as an honest, sane and solvent man is the double. Like a bill devalued by the circulation of a counterfeit, Goliadkin is devalued by the double. Dostoevsky repeatedly describes the double in the language of counterfeiting. The double is the “useless and counterfeit Goliadkin” (*bespoleznyi i fal’shivyi gospodin Goliadkin*) and the “malformed and counterfeit Mr. Goliadkin (*bezobraznomu i poddel’nomu gospodinu Goliadkinu*).<sup>321</sup> *Fal’shivyi* and *poddel’nyi* are the Russian adjectives used most frequently in reference to counterfeit currency, as in phrases like *fal’shivaia moneta*, or *poddel’nye assignatsii* (counterfeit coin, counterfeit *assignatsii*). In the following passage the narrator sums up the difficulty of distinguishing the genuine Goliadkin from the false one:

[Т]ак что если б взять да поставить их рядом, то никто, решительно никто не взял бы на себя определить, который именно настоящий Голядкин, а который поддельный, кто старенький и кто новенький, кто оригинал и кто копия.

<sup>318</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 181; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 104, translation modified.

<sup>319</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 181; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 103.

<sup>320</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 183; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 106.

<sup>321</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 186; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 110, translation modified.

[S]o that if they had been taken and placed next to each other, no one, decidedly no one, would have undertaken to determine precisely which was the real Goliadkin and which was the counterfeit, which was the old and which the new, which was the original and which the copy.<sup>322</sup>

Just as it must have been difficult for people in Russia to sort out the various kinds of genuine and false, old and new currencies during the 1839-1843 monetary reforms, so in *The Double* it is impossible to tell who is the “real,” “counterfeit,” “old,” “new,” “original,” or “copy” Goliadkin. While the hero tries desperately to assert that he is the real Goliadkin and the double a false copy, he frequently uses money and language to misrepresent his financial and personal worth; thus, he too is guilty of counterfeiting. Rather than fixing the double with the stable allegorical status of counterfeit and Goliadkin with the status of original, *The Double* sets these categories in unstoppable motion.

*The Double* suggests that there is a doubling, or counterfeiting, involved in all spending. Several scenes of potential or actual payment involve puns on the theme of doubling. In the scene at the gold and silver shop cited above, Goliadkin’s offer of just over fifteen hundred rubles for a set of dishes roughly doubles the amount of his savings (750 rubles); then he doubles that double-offer with another to pay the same amount for a shaving kit. He also writes that he will pay Vakhrameev back *two* rubles. But while these are examples of Goliadkin’s promissory use of paper (i.e. the paper money he offers to pay for metal goods at the shop, and the paper letter in which he promises to pay back Vakhrameev in silver), the most striking example of the associative link between doubling and spending occurs when he actually does make a payment in silver.

After Goliadkin eats just one pastry in a café, the cashier charges him for eleven.<sup>323</sup> Though the number of pastries Goliadkin must pay for is spelled out as a word—*odinnadtsat*’—the graphic doubling that turns 1 into 11 haunts the scene of exchange. Not understanding why he is being charged for eleven pastries, Goliadkin thinks to himself: “What is this, is some kind of witchcraft being worked on me?” (*Chto zh eto, koldovstvo, chto l’ kakoe nado mnoi sovershaetsia?*).<sup>324</sup> Then, spotting the still-chewing double standing in a doorway that he had thought was a mirror, he realizes that he has indeed been counterfeited through some kind of “witchcraft.” He thinks, “He’s substituted me, the scoundrel!” (*Podmenil, podlets!*).<sup>325</sup> Here, Goliadkin suggests the double is a counterfeit, as *podmenit*’ is a verb used to describe the illegal substitution of false for genuine currency. When Goliadkin tries to affirm his integrity by paying for the extra ten pastries with a silver ruble—the newly established single monetary standard of the Empire—the coin seems to burn his fingers: “Goliadkin flung down the silver ruble as if it had burned his fingers” (*Goliadkin brosil rubl’ serebrom tak, kak budto ob nego vse pal’tsy obzheg*).<sup>326</sup> Though silver’s value as a commodity might make it seem like a sign of “real” value, coins too are conventional signs. They contain varying amounts of the precious metals for which they are named, and the value of those metals is secured by political decree and social custom.

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<sup>322</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 147; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 55.

<sup>323</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 173; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 93.

<sup>324</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 173; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 93.

<sup>325</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 174; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 93, translation modified.

<sup>326</sup> Dostoevskii, *Dvoinik*, 174; Dostoevsky, *The Double*, 93.

Standing in for something they are not, coins, bills, and words all double the abstract or conceptual values they posit. Like the use of money, the use of language depends on a faith in equivalences. As a universal equivalent, money stands in for and so doubles exchange value; it also doubles things by giving them prices, and doubles people by representing their potential selves. Language doubles things, people, and concepts by naming them. Though the duplicating tendency of money and language are not unique to any one time or place, the checkered history of Russian money in the first half of the nineteenth century might be related to the fantastic uncertainty of Dostoevsky's narrative, with its erratic plot of spending and doubling.

Until now, the material history of Russian money has been insufficiently explored with respect to Dostoevsky's "fantastic realism," or the "warped and weird" Petersburg modernity of which it is an expression.<sup>327</sup> Whereas classic interpretations of *The Double* often explain its fantastic elements as symptoms of the hero's madness, viewing Dostoevsky's project as an essentially realist "naturalization," "rationalization," or "realization" of the Romantic *Doppelgänger* theme, a close focus on money's movements through the novel unsettles these claims to Realism.<sup>328</sup> In *The Double*, the circulation of money and its doubles highlights the arbitrariness and artfulness of all signs of value, undermining the credibility of any claim to represent the world objectively in language.<sup>329</sup> Interpretations of *The Double* that rightly point to Petersburg as a city whose social and historical contradictions proved particularly productive of fantastic literature have yet to account for the relationship between fantasy and monetary fluctuations.<sup>330</sup> Moreover, such interpretations tend to gloss over Dostoevsky's radical inquiry into the limits and possibilities of linguistic representation at the very dawn of Realism in Russia.<sup>331</sup> Haunting the mimetic ideal of Realism with the specter of suspect currency, *The Double* issues a fantastic challenge to the new aesthetic standard.

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<sup>327</sup> For a sustained examination of the concept of "fantastic realism," see Malcolm Jones, *Dostoyevsky after Bakhtin: Readings in Dostoyevsky's Fantastic Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Marshall Berman, "Petersburg: The Modernism of Underdevelopment," *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Verso, 1983), 181.

<sup>328</sup> According to Vinogradov, "Siuzhet 'Dvoynika' Dostoevskogo ponimaetsia . . . kak naturalisticheskaia transformatsiia romanticheskikh 'dvoynikov' russkoi gofmaniany [The plot of Dostoevsky's *The Double* can be understood as a naturalist transformation of the 'doubles' of Russian Hoffmanism]." "Evolutsiia russkogo naturalizma," 104. Similarly, Fanger argues that Dostoevsky "is here appropriating all the fantastic Gogolian coloring and rationalizing it. . . . [A]ll that is bizarre is traced to its source in the poor clerk's consciousness." Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism*, 160. For Terras, "*The Double* is essentially a 'realization' of the *Doppelgänger* theme." Victor Terras, *The Young Dostoevsky: 1846-1849* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 13.

<sup>329</sup> In this regard, *The Double* anticipates some of the key theoretical formulations of the New Economic Criticism. For instance, Goux links the collapse of the Gold Standard in the early twentieth century to the problem of counterfeit money and the modernist break from realist referentiality in Gide's *The Counterfeiters*; See Goux, *Coiners of Language*.

<sup>330</sup> Such interpretations include: V[alentina] E[vgen'evna] Vetlovskaiia, "Sotsial'naia tema v pervykh proizvedeniakh Dostoevskogo," *Russkaia literatura. Istorika-literaturnyi zhurnal*, no. 3 (1983): 75-94, especially p. 91; Berman, *All that is Solid*; Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism*, Chs. 5 and 6,

<sup>331</sup> Jones points out that in *The Double* Dostoevsky "explore[s] the slippage between signifier and signified and between sign and referent." *Dostoyevsky after Bakhtin*, 56. Whereas Jones ultimately identifies Dostoevsky's interest in the way "discourse breaks loose from the reality principle" with the author's concern for the "intersubjective experience of reality and the elusiveness of a much sought-after, universal Truth," I am suggesting that *The Double* shows a very different Dostoevsky—one who is not bent on finding the "Truth," but who instead leads readers on an exploration of the conventionality and literariness of language. *Dostoyevsky after Bakhtin*, 30.

## Chapter 4

Coin and Corpse:  
Reincarnations of the Miser in Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevsky

У истинного таланта каждое лицо—тип, и каждый тип, для читателя, есть знакомый незнакомец.

A true talent makes every character a type, and to the reader every type is a familiar stranger.

—Vissarion Belinsky, “About The Russian Tale and the Tales of Mr. Gogol,” 1836

If *The Double* invokes the theme of money in order to question the referential value of language, then Dostoevsky’s “Mr. Prokharchin” (“Gospodin Prokharchin,” 1846) troubles the dominant aesthetic category of early Realism, namely *type*.<sup>332</sup> By crossing the pet type of the Natural School—the petty clerk—with the ancient character type of the miser, Dostoevsky responds to contemporary critical debates about the “typical” aesthetic value of petty people and petty details.<sup>333</sup> Discussions of type from the 1830s-1840s posit it as the link between the particular and the general, the psychological and the social, and the private and the public. For instance, in the 1835 essay “About the Russian Tale and the Tales of Mr. Gogol” (“O Russkoi povesti i povestiakh g. Gogolia”), the critic Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848) celebrates type as a means of representing “a whole cast, a whole people, a whole nation” (*tselaia kasta, tselyi narod, tselaia natsiia*) in one character, and he suggests that the creation of types is the sign of true talent and originality.<sup>334</sup> Influenced by the concept of the “social type” central to early French Realism,

<sup>332</sup> F. Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” *Otechestvennye zapiski* 10 (1846).

<sup>333</sup> Faddei Bulgarin coined the term “natural school” (*natural’naia shkola*) in 1846, further developing the line of argument found in L. V. Brant’s 1845 critique of Nekrasov’s “Petersburg Corners” (“Peterburgskie ugly”). While Bulgarin used the term pejoratively, Vissarion Belinsky soon claimed it as a positive appellation for the literary movement he was promoting. I use the terms “Natural School” and “early Russian Realism” interchangeably. V. I. Kuleshov, “Znamenitiy al’manakh Nekrasova,” in *Fiziologiia Peterburga* (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), 218-19. On the critical debates surrounding the Natural School, see Kenneth E. Harper, “Criticism of the Natural School in the 1840’s,” *American Slavic and East European Review* 15, no. 3 (October 1, 1956): 400-414. Focusing on Dostoevsky’s parodic incorporation of narrative elements from works by Nikolai Nekrasov and Appolon Maikov, Priscilla Meyer argues convincingly that “Mr. Prokharchin” delivers a critique of Natural School poetics. Meyer is not concerned, however, as I am, with the question of why Dostoevsky chose a story about a miser to launch this critique. Priscilla Meyer, “Dostoevskij, Naturalist Poetics and ‘Mr. Procharčín,’” *Russian Literature* 10, no. 2 (1981): 163-90.

<sup>334</sup> Vissarion Belinskii, “O russkoi povesti i povestiakh g. Gogolia (“Arabeski” i “Mirgorod”),” in *V. G. Belinskii. Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1953), 296. On Belinsky’s understanding of type, see Victor Terras, *Belinskij and Russian Literary Criticism: The Heritage of Organic Aesthetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 70, 117-18, 125, 147-48, 211. For Lukács, “The central category and criterion of realist literature is the type, a peculiar synthesis which organically binds together the general and the particular both in characters and situations. . . . The point in question is the organic, indissoluble connection between man as a private individual and man as a social being, as a member of a community.” Wellek, by contrast, suggests that type is Realism’s attempt to reconcile the tension between “description and prescription, truth and instruction.” George Lukács, *Studies in European Realism: A Sociological Survey of the Writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Tolstoy, Gorki and Others*, trans. Edith Bone (London: Hillway

Belinsky called for writers to identify new types grounded in contemporary social reality.<sup>335</sup> This marked a clear departure from the classical and Neo-classical tradition of presenting types as embodiments of traits presumed to be universally human.

With his ancient lineage in the classical system of character types, the miser, then, was not the type of type that enthusiasts of the Natural School were advocating, and yet he stubbornly continued to appear in Russian literature of the 1830s-1840s.<sup>336</sup> In addition to “Mr. Prokharchin,” works by Pushkin, Gogol, Nekrasov, Maikov, and a host of lesser writers demonstrate a broad interest in miserliness at this time.<sup>337</sup> In their explorations of miserliness, Russian authors incorporated elements of the typological tradition imported to Russia through Neo-classical miser fables and comedies in the eighteenth century, and they were also influenced by contemporary French literature. For instance, Balzac’s misers in *Gobseck* (1830) and *Eugénie Grandet* (1833) provided models illustrating how this timeless type might be rooted in a contemporary—and tangibly French—social context. As is well known, Dostoevsky himself translated *Eugénie Grandet* before he wrote *Poor Folk*.<sup>338</sup> Meanwhile, Molière’s comedy *The Miser* (*L’Avare*, 1668) was staged almost every year in St. Petersburg, Moscow, or both cities between 1830 and 1850.<sup>339</sup>

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Publishing CO, 1950), esp. 6-8; René Wellek, “The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship, *Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven, 1963), esp. 242-46.

<sup>335</sup> According to Wellek, Charles Nodier imported the notion of type from German to French aesthetics in his 1832 essay, “Des Types en littérature.” One of the most important German theorists of type had been Schelling, for whom a type was a “great universal figure of mythic proportion” like Hamlet, Falstaff, or Faust. In addition to this meaning, however, there emerged in French literature the notion of a “social type” that was crucial for Balzac in *The Human Comedy* (*La Comédie humaine*, 1829-47). As Terras notes, Belinsky’s concept of type evolved over the course of his career: whereas he first understood type as a representation of universally human traits, he came to see it as a representation of traits that are nationally, historically, and finally socially determined. Wellek 242-43. On the Russian importation of early French Realist aesthetics through the genre of the physiological sketch, see A. G. Tseitlin, *Stanovlenie realizma v russkoi literature. Russkii fiziologicheskii ocherk* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965).

<sup>336</sup> Early miser texts include fables by Aesop (620-560 B.C.E.) and Phaedrus (c. 15 B.C.E. - c. 50 C.E.); Menander’s *The Arbitrants* (*Epitrepontes*, 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.); Plautus’ comedy *The Pot of Gold* (*Aulularia*, c. 195 B.C.E.); and Theophrastus’ theoretical treatise *The Characters* (319 B.C.E.), which includes characters defined by greed (Anaischuntia), pennypinching (Mikrologia), and stinginess (Aneleutheria). According to Goldberg, the miser was already a stock character when Menander wrote *The Arbitrants*, as the humorous treatment of Smikrines depends for its effect on the audience’s recognition of the character as the typical “miserly old man of comedy.” Sander M. Goldberg, *The Making of Menander's Comedy* (University of California Press, 1980), 33.

<sup>337</sup> Russian miser texts published in the 1830s-1840s include Nikolai Nekrasov, “Rostovshchik” (1841); A. N. Maikov, “Mashenka” (1846); Mons’er Kukareku, “Adam Adamovich Adamgeim” (1833), which was reprinted in 1843 and 1847; and G. O. Kvitka, *Pokhozheniia Stolbikova* (1840), a fragment of which, entitled “Skupoi,” was first published in 1839. Second and third editions of I. Kalashnikov’s, “Doch’ kuptsa Zholobova” were published in 1832 and 1842, respectively.

<sup>338</sup> See Leonid Petrovich Grossman, “Bal’zak i Dostoevskii,” in *Poetika Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Gos. akademiia khudozh. nauk, 1925). Donald Rayfield, “Dostoyevsky’s Eugénie Grandet,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 20, no. 2 (April 1984): 133-142.

<sup>339</sup> In 1757, *The Miser* was (along with *Tartuffe*, *The Misanthrope*, and *An Arranged Marriage*) among the first of Molière’s works to be translated and staged in Russian. New translations by S. T. Aksakov and V. I. Orlov appeared in 1830 and 1843, respectively. In terms of the number of years in which the play was staged in St. Petersburg or Moscow, *The Miser* was second only to *The Bourgeois Gentleman* in frequency between the years 1757-1845. Another miser production in the 1830s was *Skriagi v tiskakh: Opera-vodevil’ v odnom deistvii*, translated from French by D. T. Lenskogo and performed in Petersburg in 1836 and in Moscow each year from 1836-1840. N. G. Zograf, *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra v semi tomakh*. (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1977), vols. 1-4 inclusive, 3:312-13.

There are multiple plausible explanations for the productivity of the miser type in these years. Writers' interest in money and miserliness would have certainly been encouraged by the early Realist imperative to expose both the typical features of contemporary private life and the relationships between the private and public spheres.<sup>340</sup> Nikolai Nekrasov makes an implicit call for such exposure in his review of the 1845 collection he helped to write, *Physiology of Petersburg* (*Fiziologiiia Peterburga*):

[П]еред нами вдруг падает и раскрывается книга преблаго-образная. . . называемая "Физиология Петербурга," которой цель - раскрыть все тайны нашей общественной жизни, все пружины радостных и печальных сцен нашего домашнего быта, все источники наших уличных явлений; ход и направление нашего гражданского и нравственного образования; характер и методу наших наслаждений; типические свойства всех разрядов нашего народонаселения.

Before us there has suddenly appeared a most noble book... called "Physiology of Petersburg," whose purpose is to uncover all the mysteries of our social life, all the sources of the joyful and melancholy scenes of our domestic routine, all the sources of what takes place on our streets; the current and direction of our civic and moral education; the character and method of our enjoyments; the typical characteristics of all segments of our population.<sup>341</sup>

In this essay, widely considered the programmatic manifesto of the Natural School, Nekrasov praises *Physiology of Petersburg* for the goal it sets itself to "uncover all the mysteries" of private and public life, thus revealing the "typical characteristics" of the population.

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the expansion of the money economy throughout the traditionally agrarian Russian Empire made money an increasingly ubiquitous element of both private and public life.<sup>342</sup> While it would be unwise to assume that miserliness—the pathological desire to accumulate money and the refusal to spend it—became any more

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<sup>340</sup> Elizabeth Shepard documents the rising interest in private life in Russian literature of the 1830s in "The Society Tale and the Innovative Argument in Russian Prose Fiction of the 1830s," *Russian Literature* X (1981): 111-61. On private life in the European novel, see Ian Watt, "Private Experience and the Novel," *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: U of CA Press, 1962): 174-207; Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>341</sup> This statement recalls Balzac's description of his project in his famous 1842 preface to *The Human Comedy* (*La Comédie humaine*): "By adhering to the strict lines of a reproduction a writer might be a more or less faithful, and more or less successful, a painter (*un peintre*) of types of humanity (*des types humains*), a narrator of the dramas of private life, an archaeologist of social furniture, a cataloguer of professions, a registrar of good and evil; but to deserve the praise of which every artist must be ambitious, must I not also investigate the reasons or the cause of these social effects, detect the hidden sense of this vast assembly of figures, passions, and incidents?" N[ikolai] Nekrasov, "Fiziologiiia Peterburga," *Polnoe sobraniiie sochinenii i pisem v piatnadtsati tomakh*, vol. 11, bk. 1 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1989), 186. Honoré de Balzac, "Avant-Propos," *La Comédie humaine, Premier volume, Première partie, Études de mœurs* (Paris: Furne, 1842), 15; Honoré de Balzac, *At the Sign of the Cat and Racket*, trans. Clara Bell (London: J. M. Dent, 1895), 6.

<sup>342</sup> Riasanovsky begins his chapter on Russian history of the first half of the nineteenth century with an epigraph from Rozhkov that identifies the "development of an exchange or money economy" as the "main feature of the economic history" of this period. As discussed in Chapter 3, currency fluctuations throughout this period and the Imperial financial reforms of 1839-43 made money the subject of widespread public discussion. Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 341. See also Pintner, *Russian Economic Policy*, 185-86.

typical in this period than it had been before, the well-established tradition of the miser type was capable of putting pressure on literary representations of any characters keenly interested in money. Support for the view that the miser type was a kind of baggage money carried around with it in literature may be found in the frequent French and English novelistic representations of bourgeois capitalists that make use of recognizable elements of the miser type, despite the logical incommensurability of capitalist enterprise with the miser's typical refusal to spend.<sup>343</sup> Economic transformations notwithstanding, the miser's iconic grasp on his own money maintained a remarkably firm hold on the European literary imagination throughout the nineteenth century.

Moreover, as a state-issued object people handle every day, money mediates between the private and public, and this gives it a unique appeal for writers interested in the relationship between these two spheres. Each time people spend money, their most private interests and desires enter into the complex networks of exchange that connect people to one another in local communities and around the globe. Conversely, money is a medium through which those broad networks of exchange penetrate the lives of ordinary individuals. Bearing the official iconography of power in the form of state seals, symbols, or images of heads of state, money may also be carried on the body and stashed in the home. It is exchanged among family members and in religious ceremonies as a token of emotions and beliefs either experienced or simulated, and as centuries of religious and social stigmatization of miserliness have shown, it is subject to moral regulation and censure.<sup>344</sup> Money's pivotal role as a mediator between public and private produces the narrative tension in stories about misers.

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<sup>343</sup> From Molière's Harpagon to Balzac's Gobseck and Old Grandet and Dicken's Ebenezer Scrooge, misers frequently appear in modern letters as representatives of the bourgeois capitalist order. Whereas Marx notes that the miser's irrational hoarding of money makes him not a true capitalist but rather a "capitalist gone mad," authors from at least the seventeenth century on make use of the character type of the miser in their literary depictions of profit-driven investors, conflating the miserly and capitalist drives for accumulation. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 254.

<sup>344</sup> In post-classical Europe, literary representations of misers took on the force of Christian allegory as the Catholic Church condemned avarice (in Latin, *avaritia*) as one of the seven deadly sins. The treatment of avarice as sin (already visible in early Church writings) was based on the imperative to reject earthly for spiritual wealth. As in the Fourth Circle of Dante's *Inferno* (1308-21), avarice is frequently depicted in literature and paintings as leading to spiritual death and the torments of hell. In Jan Provost's painting "Death and the Miser" (c. 1500) and Hieronymous Bosch's painting of the same title (c. 1500), misers are represented bargaining with death. According to the Church, wealth was not evil in itself—it could be given as charity to the poor or to the Church itself. Avarice held the blame for abuse of wealth along with usury, which was reviled as sinful and specifically unnatural. The ban on usury worked to stigmatize Jews in particular, even as it went on unofficially and under hidden guises—or in analogous forms—among Christians. Molière explores this hypocrisy in *The Miser*, revealing the money-lending of the wealthy bourgeois Christian Harpagon and associating him with an apparently Jewish "broker," Master Simon. With the definitive rise of capitalism in eighteenth-century Europe, avarice gradually became normalized in political discourse, taking the less emotional, more rational, and purportedly innocuous form of "interest." It is worth noting that Sigmund Freud's account of parsimony is concerned only with a pathological aversion to spending money, and not with the desire to accumulate wealth; by the early twentieth century, the desire to accumulate so as to consume was normative. This demonstrates the extent to which cultural conceptions of proper or improper attitudes toward money shift over time and in accordance with changing economic conditions. In Russia, the Orthodox Church did not have an equivalent to the seven deadly sins, and there was no specific targeting of avarice (*skupost'* or *alchnost'*) as a sin more grave than others. Avarice does conflict, however, with a number of Russian cultural values, such as asceticism, generosity, and, in Lotman's words, "vruchenie sebia (self-giving)." In the early nineteenth century, miserliness was also contrary to the cultural ideal of prodigality among the nobility. Richard Newhauser, *The Early History of Greed: The Sin of Avarice in Early Medieval Thought and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); James F. Gaines, "Molière's Uncanonical Miser," in *Classical Unities: Place, Time, Action; Actes du 32e congrès annuel de la North American Society for Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, vol. 2000 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2000), 199-214; Sigmund Freud, "Character and Anal Erotism," in *Character and Culture*,

Beginning with the ancient Greek and Latin fables and comedies that establish the typology of the miser, this figure is represented as an individual who seeks to privatize a public good and fails. Because he values money as an end in itself, rather than as a means to obtain other ends, the miser withdraws money from circulation in the local economy and stores it up in a private place. As the value of his private hoard increases, so too does his need for privacy: the miser isolates himself from others, keeping secrets, refusing the emotional, spiritual, and economic exchanges deemed normal in his society, and manipulating signs so as to present himself as having no money to spare. Almost invariably, the miser's secrets are made public; his money is stolen or transferred to an heir upon his death, re-entering the circuit of exchange he fought so hard to curtail. Ending with the normative triumph of the collective over the individual and a dissolution or decomposition of the miser's body and his hoard, the miser tale is constructed on a poetics of secrets exposed and savings dispersed. This typically involves a metaliterary process whereby the narrator and the other characters explicitly model the reader's reevaluation—and condemnation—of the miser and his attempts to privatize money and meaning.<sup>345</sup> Traditionally conceived as a sharply negative form of economic and emotional behavior, and therefore relegated to the low genres of fables and comedies, miserliness offered early Realist authors a welcome narrative opportunity to expose private pettiness (greed for money) to public view.

Even more importantly, for Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevsky, the interest of the miser stems from the ongoing transformation of the notion of type in the 1830s-1840s. Setting themselves the task of creating types of the new, historically and culturally determined kind, these Russian writers do not abandon the classical European miser type altogether. Instead, they either historicize it, as in Pushkin's "The Covetous Knight" ("Skupoi rytsar'," 1836), Russify it by inserting it into the context of the feudal countryside, as in Gogol's *Dead Souls* (*Mertvye dushi*, 1842), or make it the object of explicitly metatypical reflection, as in "Mr. Prokharchin." I propose that the miser appealed to Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevsky because he was not just any old type, but rather *the type par excellence*, a status earned through his recurrent and consistent appearance in European letters. In addition to a basic narrative line of secrets exposed, the miser also carries with him remarkably durable iconography: he is repeatedly associated with underground, tomb-like spaces, containers like sacks and lockboxes, keys, corpses, and, of course, money. He most often appears as an old man who has a good deal of money but is unwilling to spend it on food, drink, clothing and other daily necessities. His physical wasting away conveys a sense of spiritual death and decay, as well as the failure of his efforts to contain and retain what is his.<sup>346</sup>

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Collier Books ed. (New York: Collier, 1963); Cf. Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge, 2004), 238; Iurii Lotman, "'Dogovor' i 'vruchenie sebja' kak arkhietipicheskie modeli kul'tury," *Izbrannye stati* (Tallinn: Aleksandra, 1992-93): 3:345-55; Lotman, "Ocherk dvorianskogo byta," 36-42.

<sup>345</sup> The metaliterary reading I offer of Russian miser texts in this chapter is informed by Logan Browning's insightful account of Charles Dickens' misers. While he identifies the miser's typical attempts to keep secrets and to control signs and readings—i.e. other people's readings of him, and his own self-reading—Browning does not, as I do, consider money as an object that mediates between public and private. Moreover, I pursue an original line of inquiry by exploring the metatypical aspects of nineteenth-century Russian miser texts. Logan Delano Browning, "Reading Dickens's Misers" (Dissertation, Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina, 1999).

<sup>346</sup> On the miser's association with death, see Note 14. On "parsimony" as an anal-retentive fixation, see Freud, "Character and Anal Erotism."

From antiquity to the modern era, can any character type compete with the miser in terms of the sheer quantity of instances he has accumulated? Is any type more typical? Furthermore, the miser is not just a typical, but a metatypical type. His metatypicality inheres in his greed to accumulate another type: money. Money is like type in that it gains its significance through a process of abstraction whereby one particular thing (such as a gold coin or a bill) is recognized as the bearer of a generalized (exchange) value. Numismatic terminology bolsters the analogy between type and money, as the imprint on a coin is called a type: this imprint is what transforms a particular piece of metal into a representative of general value.<sup>347</sup> Seeking to obtain money and to refrain from exchanging it for something else, misers value type for its own sake.

While earlier authors generally do not exploit the miser's metatypicality, Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevsky all have recourse to this type in works that demonstrate their conscious experimentation with type as such. Dostoevsky in particular uses the miser to turn the very process of typification into the story of "Mr. Prokharchin." In order to understand Dostoevsky's simultaneous engagement with classical and early Realist methods of character typology, this chapter traces the emergence of the miser in Russian literature and explores examples of its incarnation in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century fables as well as in Pushkin's "The Covetous Knight" and Gogol's *Dead Souls*, two of the most important intertexts for Dostoevsky's story. While the fables give a possible indication of why the miser has been such a prolific type throughout history, Pushkin and Gogol transform the didactic tradition of the fable genre, using the miser type not simply to criticize greed for money, but as a metaliterary tool with which to reflect on their own aesthetic practices. Together, "The Covetous Knight" and *Dead Souls* lay the groundwork for Dostoevsky's exploration of money as an objectification of abstract value, and consequently for the analogy he posits between money and character type.

### Typical Accumulation—Miser Fables in Russian Literature

Like the plots of ambition analyzed in Chapters 1 and 2, the miser type was a foreign import that took on new significance in Russia. In the eighteenth century, Russian readers were presented with western and western-style representations of misers in satirical stage comedies and fables that were translated or adapted from Greek, Latin, French, and German. On stage, misers could be seen throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth in performances of Molière's *The Miser* (*L'Avare*, first performed in Russian in 1757) and the comic opera *The Miser* (*Skupoi*, first performed in 1782), with music by V. A. Pashkevich (c. 1742-1797) and libretto by IA. B. Kniazhnin (1742-1793).<sup>348</sup> In the wake of multiple Russian translations of Aesop, Phaedrus, and La Fontaine, which testify to the French-inspired Neo-classical interest in ancient Greek and Roman forms and the Enlightenment predilection for didactic literature, the fable flourished as a genre of poetry in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>349</sup> Exemplifying the practices of "cultural import" essential to Russian Neo-classicism, Russian writers used fables, including those about misers, as material they could imitate as they

<sup>347</sup> Cf. Shell, *The Economy of Literature*.

<sup>348</sup> Kniazhnin's libretto was first published as *Skupoi, Komicheskaja opera v 1 d.*, Tekst Ia. B. Kniazhnin, Muzyka V. A. Pashkevich, *Sobranie sochinenii Iakova Kniazhnina*, t. 3 (St. Petersburg: 1787). His play was performed in Moscow or St. Petersburg in twenty of the thirty years between 1782 and 1812. The first translation of Molière's *The Miser* was that of Kropotova, first performed in 1757 and published in 1760. Zograf, 1:465; 2:521; 1:464.

<sup>349</sup> On the Russian fable, see N. L. Stepanov, "Russkaia basnia," *Russkaia basnia XVIII-XIX vekov* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1977): 5-62.

worked to develop a secular literary tradition.<sup>350</sup> While there is no evidence that miser fables were of greater interest in this period than any other fables, the miser is notable for the persistence with which he appears: multiple miser fables are present in the collections of most major Russian fabulists up to and including Ivan Krylov (1769-1844). Furthermore, among the types of human vices, virtues, and other character traits found in fables, the miser proved uniquely capable of migrating from eighteenth-century Neo-classicism to a large number of nineteenth-century Romantic and early Realist works.

One of the most striking features of eighteenth-century Russian miser fables is their habit of identifying themselves precisely as representations of a well-established type. For instance, in “Watchman of His Own Wealth” (“Storozh bogatsva svoego” 1762), the pioneer of the fable genre in Russia Aleksander Sumarokov (1717-1777) establishes a clear lineage between his text and the poem “To a Miser” from the Greek *Anacreontea*,<sup>351</sup> Phaedrus’ fable “The Fox and the Dragon,” and Molière’s *The Miser*:

Сказал певец Анакреон,  
 Что тщетно тот богатство собирает,  
 Который так равно, как бедный умирает. . . .  
 У Федра Притча есть: лисица роя нору,  
 Прорылась глубоко,  
 И в землю забрела, гораздо далеко:  
 Нашла сокровище, под стражей у дракона,  
 По Молиерову у Гарпагона,  
 По моему у дурака,  
 Который отлежал, на золоте, бока.

Anacreon said  
 That one collects riches in vain,  
 Who will die like a poor man anyway. . . .  
 Phaedrus has a fable: a fox digging a hole,  
 Dug down deep,  
 And delved deep into the earth:  
 He found a treasure guarded by a dragon,  
 Who Like Molière’s Harpagon,  
 And my fool,  
 Lay on his side upon his gold.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Aleksander Sumarokov and his followers wrote their fables in conversational Russian, giving the fable a special role in the development of the Russian literary language. Stepanov, “Russkaia basnia,” 11, 13. I borrow the term “cultural import” from Joachim Klein, who explores eighteenth-century Russian importation of European literary models, and the transformation of these models that resulted from changes in their social context and function. Ioakhim Klein, *Puti kul’turnogo importa: trudy po russkoi literature XVIII veka* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul’tury, 2005), esp. 319-23. On the development of the Russian literary language, see V. M Zhivov, *Iazyk i kul’tura v Rossii XVIII veka* (Moscow: Shkola “Iazyki russkoi kul’tury”, 1996).

<sup>351</sup> The poems in the *Anacreontea* (1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E.-6<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) were for centuries falsely attributed to Anacreon (570-488 B.C.E.).

<sup>352</sup> I have made minor changes to Sumarokov’s text, consistent with modern orthography: I have changed “iat” to “e” and “i” to “и,” and have removed “hard signs” from the ends of words. Sumarokov also included two other pieces about miserliness in his first volume of fables: “The Miser” (“Skupoi”) and “The Miserly Dog”

Here, Sumarokov, who earned himself the appellation “the Russian La Fontaine,” joins western classical and Neo-classical authors in an age-old conversation about miserliness. In another example, in the fable “The Miser” (“Skupoi” 1763-67), V. I. Maikov (1728-78) adds Sumarokov’s name to the list of authors who have offered examples of the miser type:

Он—  
 Как Молиеров Гарпагон  
 Или каков у Федра есть дракон,  
 Который на своем богатстве почивает,  
 А Сумароков называет  
 Такого дураком  
 И стражем своего имения,  
 Которому в нем нет увеселенья.

He is—  
 Like Molière’s Harpagon  
 Or like Phaedrus’ dragon,  
 Who sleeps on his riches,  
 And Sumarokov calls  
 That one a fool  
 And a watchman of his own property,  
 Who gets no joy from it.<sup>353</sup>

Writing that his miser is “like” Molière’s Harpagon, Phaedrus’ Dragon, and Sumarokov’s Watchman, Maikov inserts his fable into a tradition shown to have already taken root in Russia. Thus, both Sumarokov’s and Maikov’s fables make performative declarations of Russian literature’s continuation of western typological tradition. As a type that facilitates comparison of Russian, French, Latin and Greek texts, the miser is a recognizable form of literary currency that can be transferred from one culture to another, and the self-avowed stockpiling of this currency figures the very development of Russian literature as a process of accumulation.

In citing previous examples of the miser type, these authors show the extent to which their appropriation of classical material is mediated by French precedent. In his 1668 adaptation of Aesop’s fable “The Miser Who Lost his Treasure,” La Fontaine writes:

L’homme au trésor caché qu’Esopé nous propose,  
 Servira d’exemple à la chose.

The man with the hidden treasure that Aesop puts before us  
 Will serve as an example of this.<sup>354</sup>

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(“Skupaia sobaka”). Aleksandr Sumarokov, “Storozh bogatsva svoego,” *Pritchi Aleksandra Sumarokova*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1762).

<sup>353</sup> V. I. Maikov, “Skupoi,” *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1966), 148.

<sup>354</sup> La Fontaine, “The Miser Who Lost His Treasure” (“L’Avaré qui a perdu son trésor”), *La Fontaine: Selected Fables*, trans. Christopher Wood (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), 92.

Like La Fontaine before them, Sumarokov and Maikov adhere to the Neo-classical poetics of *imitatio*, following the examples set by previous authors. In *The Miser*, Molière displays a related tendency to insist on his miser's typicality by selecting the name Harpagon, which had already been used in several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century miser comedies.<sup>355</sup> Yet the fables highlight the proliferation of examples of the *same* type rather than the continued use of a single preexisting name for it. This may be due to the fact that as a genre that derives from the rhetorical figure of the *exemplum*, the fable is concerned with putting forth fresh examples of general principles.<sup>356</sup> La Fontaine indicates this centrality of the example to the fable by saying Aesop's miser "will serve as an example" of that which he wishes to discuss.

In order to provide examples of general principles, fables are presented as metaphors. The receiver of a fable is meant to understand that animals or people in the fables are *like* people outside of them, that the occurrence in the story is *like* something that might happen in real life, and that the lesson the fable offers would be applicable in such a situation. According to N. L. Stepanov, the fable's ability to establish an analogy between concrete elements of contemporary social reality and more general principles is what has made it such a prolific genre in world literature: writers in any historical context can respond to existing fables with new examples of the principles they posit.<sup>357</sup> I would add that the fable's exemplary function may also explain why the miser has been such a persistent type in fable collections. Like a fable, a piece of money works as both a metaphor and an example: it can be considered like—or worth—anything else, and it serves as a concrete example of abstract exchange value. Therefore, the miser's accumulation of money makes him like the fabulist who accumulates fables in a collection, or who helps accumulate the world-historical store of miser fables. Even if fabulists do not explicitly highlight this metaliterary aspect of miser fables, the cross-cultural ubiquity of money works to generate ever more examples of the miser type.

Positing equivalence between Russian misers and their foreign precursors, many fables from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries blend the western miser type with topical political references and native cultural elements. For instance, in the satirical "Pritcha: skupoï" ("Fable: The Miser," 1761), by I. F. Bogdanovich (1743-1803), the miser is a superstitious provincial who resists the Europeanization of manners promoted earlier in the century by Peter I's reforms. In a fable translated from German and titled "Kashchei" (1779), and in the original fable "Kashchei's Desire" ("Zhelanie kashcheia," 1782), the popular fabulist Ivan Khemnitser (1745-1784) gives the name of the Russian folkloric miser Koshchei the Deathless (Koshchei *bessmertnyi*) to misers of the European type.<sup>358</sup> Ivan Krylov, too, puts this type in dialog with

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<sup>355</sup> The name Harpagon is of Greek origin and means "rapacious" or "grasping." Molière is thought to have borrowed it from Urceus Codrus' 1530 supplement to Plautus' incomplete *Aulularia*, which was translated into French in 1658. Molière, "Notes" to *L'Avare, Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 2:1383.

<sup>356</sup> In his essay "About the Fable and the Fables of Krylov" ("O basne i basniakh Krylova"), Vasilii Zhukovskii notes the origins of the fable in the rhetorical example: "it was nothing other than a simple rhetorical means, an example, a comparison" (*ona byla ne inoe chto, kak prostoi ritoricheskii sposob, primer, sravnenie*). V. A. Zhukovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4-i tomakh* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1960), 4:404. On the fable and the *exemplum*, see also Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 27, 45-54.

<sup>357</sup> Stepanov, "Russkaia basnia," 9.

<sup>358</sup> Khemnitser's "Kashchei" is a translation of Christian Gellert's fable "Der Wucherer" ("The Usurer"). The name Kashchei and the word kashchei—sometimes spelled Koshchei or koshchei—appear in at least three of Khemnitser's fables, several folktales in Afanas'ev's collection, Pushkin's "Ruslan and Liudmila" ("Ruslan i Liudmila," 1820), and Gogol's *Dead Souls*. In Pushkin's text, Kashchei is clearly a miser: "There Tsar Kashchei is wasting away over his gold (Tam tsar' Kashchei nad zlatom chakhnet)." According to Proskurin and Nikitin's

Russian folklore in his fable “The Miser” (“Skupoi,” 1825), which tells of a wealthy *domovoi* (house spirit) who tricks his miserly host into guarding his treasure.<sup>359</sup> After leaving his money with the miser for many years, the *domovoi* returns to the house to find that, indeed, his host has behaved in accordance with typological tradition:

... Скупой с ключом в руке  
От голода издох на сундуке —  
И все червонцы целы.

... The Miser, key in hand,  
Lies starved to death upon the coffer, and—  
The ducats all remain.<sup>360</sup>

The image of the dead miser clutching his keys, having starved himself to protect the gold in his trunk, includes some of the most important iconographic elements of the miser type. The paradoxical impoverishment that results from the miser’s unwillingness to let money go points to the depletion of value that results from treating money as pure means. The perennial keys are emblematic of the miser’s failed attempts to keep his money and his secrets locked away. The miser’s death, which implies the imminent decomposition of both his body and his hoard, serves as yet another interpretive key for readers, suggesting the transience and futility of human attempts to control and contain.

As if the miser’s death weren’t a clear enough warning to readers, in fables of this kind the final (or sometimes the initial) lines typically provide a direct critique of miserliness. This critique may be issued by the narrator or another character, whose voice works as though in collaboration with that of the narrator to deliver the meaning of the fable. For instance, Phaedrus’ fable “The Dog, the Treasure, and the Vulture”—translated into Russian by Ivan Barkov (1732-

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commentary to “Ruslan i Liudmila,” Pushkin had in mind not the immortal wizard of folklore, Koshchei the Deathless, but rather a literary miser named Kashchei who appears in multiple satiric works of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Khemnitser’s fables are examples of such works. However, given that in one of the folk tales in Afanas’ev’s collection Koshchei does possess great wealth, and that in Pushkin’s text Kashchei appears in the midst of a description of folkloric figures, it would seem that these two characters either merged in the minds of some storytellers and authors, or else that literary representations of Kashchei/Koshchei were informed by folkloric tradition. In Vladimir Dal’s dictionary, “kashchei” and “koshchei” are listed as alternative spellings for the same word, which can be used as either a proper or a common noun to designate Koshchei the Deathless of folklore, or else a very thin man, a miser, or a usurer. Khemnitser does not capitalize the word but uses it to designate a typical miser. I. I. Khemnitser, “Zhelanie koshcheia,” “Kashchei,” and “Dva Kuptsa,” *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1963), 87, 64, 101; A. N. Afanas’ev, “Koshchei bessmertnyi,” tales 156-58, *Narodnye russkie skazki A. N. Afanas’eva v trekh tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1958), 1:358-375; A. S. Pushkin, “Ruslan i Liudmila,” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Voskresenie, 1994-97), 4:6; N. V. Gogol’, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1976-79), 5:96; Oleg Proskurin and Nikita Okhotin, commentary to “Ruslan i Liudmila,” *Poemy i povesti Aleksandra Pushkina, Sochineniia: Kommentirovannoe izdanie pod obshchei redaktsiei Devida M. Betae* (Moscow: Novoe izdatel’stvo, 2006), 1:87; Vladimir Ivanovich Dal’, *Tolkovyi slovar’ zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka* (Moscow: Russkii iazyk, 1978).

<sup>359</sup> Krylov also wrote about misers in his fable “The Miser and the Hen,” (“Skupoi i kuritsa,” 1819) and his satirical journal, *Spirit Post (Pochta dukhov, 1789)*. I. A. Krylov, *Basni* (Moscow: Akademii nauk SSSR, 1956), 203-04, 158; I. A. Krylov, “Pis’mo XLVII,” *Pochta dukhov, Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969), 1:300-09.

<sup>360</sup> Krylov, “Skupoi,” 204; Ivan Kriloff, “The Miser,” *Kriloff’s Original Fables*, trans. I. Henry Harrison (London: Remington & Co., 1883), 185.

68) in 1764—tells of a dog who finds a treasure, is struck by the “spell of avarice,” and guards the gold “without thought of eating”; after the dog starves to death, the fable closes with the lines: “Standing over him, a vulture is reported to have said: ‘Dog, you deserve to live here dead; you set your heart all at once on wealth fit for a king, in spite of the fact that you were begotten at a street-corner and raised on a dunghill.’”<sup>361</sup>

Krylov’s fable departs from this structural tradition of placing a non-miserly character in the fable to collude with the narrator in criticizing miserliness: the other character in Krylov’s fable—the *domovoi*—is himself a miser who uses the main miser as a means to his own parsimonious ends. If the *domovoi* is working together with the narrator or author of this fable, then their project is one of narrative trickery—the “gay craftiness” (*veseloe lukavstvo uma*) Pushkin ascribed to Krylov—rather than didacticism or social satire.<sup>362</sup> Krylov is known for the clever humor of his fables, and notably, part of the humor of this one results from its blend of European and Russian cultural models. The last lines read:

Когда у золота скупой не ест, не пьет,—  
Не домовому ль он червонцы бережет?

When, ‘midst his gold, a miser will neither eat nor drink—  
To keep for the House Spirit all his ducats (*chervontsy*) does he think?<sup>363</sup>

Beyond raising the miser fable’s more traditional question of what purpose money has when it is kept hidden away, these final lines slyly ask if the classic European miser type can be understood with reference to, or even outsmarted by, Russian folk wisdom.

While Sumarokov had assigned fables a low place in the Neo-classical genre hierarchy,<sup>364</sup> in the late eighteenth-century a major trend in the Russian fable tradition was the

<sup>361</sup> Phaedrus, “The Dog, The Treasure, and the Vulture,” trans. Edwin Perry, Ben Edwin Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1965). In Barkov’s Russian translation, the final lines of the fable read: “Тогда, как идет слух, над нею стоя Сип, / Достоинно, говорил, ты алчной пес, погиб, / Кой на распутии в навозе зародился, / Скитался там и здесь, навозом и кормился, / Да в голову того ты выростиши не взял, / И царских вдруг себе сокровищ пожелал.” Ivan Barkov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2004), 179-80. Phaedrus’ fable is unusually sharp in its critique of not only avarice, but also the desire to have more wealth than one has at birth. Aesop’s fable “The Miser,” by contrast, is lighter in tone, and it is directed against the logical error of valuing that which one does use. The miser does not die at the end, but is robbed instead. When another character sees the miser standing over the hole where he had kept his treasure, lamenting his loss, that character says, “Don’t grieve, my friend, just take a stone and bury it in the same place and think of it as gold in a vault. Even when the gold was there you made no use of it.” Aesop, “The Miser,” in Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus*.

<sup>362</sup> Pushkin viewed Krylov’s “gay craftiness” (*veseloe lukavstvo uma*) as a quintessential expression of the Russian national spirit. A. S. Pushkin, “O predislovii g-na Lemonte k perevodu basen I. A. Krylova,” *Sobranie sochinenii v 10-i tomakh* (Moscow, 1962), 6:15, cited in Stepanov, “Russkaia basnia,” 5. I borrow Tatiana Wolff’s translation of “veseloe lukavstvo uma” as “gay craftiness.” Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, *Pushkin on literature*, ed. Tatiana Wolff (Northwestern University Press, 1998), 125.

<sup>363</sup> Krylov, “Skupoi,” 204; Kriloff, “The Miser,” 185.

<sup>364</sup> In Sumarokov’s “Letter II” (“Epistola II,” 1747), the first Russian aesthetic treatise based on Boileau’s *L’Art Poétique*, he discusses the fable as a low yet noble genre suitable to simple diction, and cites La Fontaine’s fables as examples to follow: “The style of fables must be humorous but noble, / And its humble spirit is suitable for simple words, / As La Fontaine wisely demonstrated / And achieved worldly glory through his fabulistic verse” (*Sklad basen dolzhen byt’ shutliv, no blagoroden, / I nizkii v onom dukh k prostym slovam prigoden, / Kak to de La Fonten razumno pokazal / I basennym stikhom preslaven v svete stal*). Aleksandr Sumarokov, “Epistle on the Art of Poetry,” in *Selected Aesthetic Works of Sumarokov and Karamzin*, trans. Henry M. Nebel (Washington, D.C.:

“poeticization” of the genre.<sup>365</sup> In addition to producing poetic fables, Russian poets also incorporated elements of fables in other forms of poetry, as in the ode “To Skopikhin” (“K Skopikhinu,” 1805), by Gavriil Derzhavin (1743-1816). Like the miser fables by Bogdanovich, Khemnitser, and Krylov, “To Skopikhin” inserts a miser of the European type into a Russian cultural context. Derzhavin’s poem is an imitation of Horace’s ode “Nullus Argento” (23 B.C.E.), which replaces the original Latin names with those of Russian historical personages, thereby positing Russian equivalents to classical precedents. “To Skopikhin” also includes generic and thematic features of the miser fables that proliferated in Russia in the eighteenth century. Horace’s ode, by contrast, does not have fabular elements. Blending the odic tradition of civic-minded poetry with the moral censure of miserliness found in fables, “To Skopikhin” advises wealthy Russians to use their private funds for the public good by supporting charitable or academic institutions.

After the poem was published, Derzhavin explained that the person he had in mind as the addressee of the poem, whom he calls Skopikhin—a name that stems from the verb *skopit*’ (to save up)—was a real Russian man: the millionaire Sobakin, a contemporary of Derzhavin who did not use his money for any social good.<sup>366</sup> The poem praises N. P. Sheremetev (1751-1809) and several other wealthy Russians for putting their money to charitable use. Derzhavin sets these men up as positive examples for readers to follow, and opposes them to the negative example of a miser figure reminiscent of those that appear in fables:

Престань и ты жить в погребах,  
Как крот в ущельях подземельных,  
И на чугунных там цепях  
Стеречь, при блеске искр елейных,  
Висящи бочки серебра  
Иль лаять псом вокруг двора.

Stop your living in the cellars,  
Like a mole in underground ravines,  
And [stop] guarding the casks of silver  
Hanging there on iron chains,  
Before the glow of unctuous flames,  
Or barking around the yard like a dog.<sup>367</sup>

These lines display characteristic features of the fable: the metaphorical use of animals to depict human passions, and a direct moral instruction to readers. The mole worshipping his silver underground recalls the misers—animal and human alike—who store their treasure underground in countless fables. The barking dog recalls the dog afflicted with avarice in Phaedrus’ “The Dog, the Treasure, and the Vulture,” and also Sobakin (the millionaire Derzhavin had in mind writing the poem), whose last name sounds like the common Russian word for dog, *sobaka*.

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University Press of America, Inc., 1981), 82; A. P. Sumarokov, “Epistola II,” *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1957), 122.

<sup>365</sup> Stepanov, “Russkaia basnia,” 31.

<sup>366</sup> Gavriil Derzhavin, “Ob”iasneniia Derzhavina k svoim sochineniiam,” cited in the notes to “K Skopikhinu,” *Stikhotvoreniia* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1957), 436.

<sup>367</sup> Derzhavin, “K Skopikhinu,” *Stikhotvoreniia*, 291.

Thus, Derzhavin's poem incorporates elements of a form traditionally assigned a low place on the Neo-classical genre hierarchy—the fable—in a work of the highest form—the ode. As an important intertext for Pushkin's "The Covetous Knight," "To Skopikhin" serves as a direct link between the tradition of the Neo-classical miser fable and the miser narratives of the 1830s-1840s.

### A Passion for Equivalence—Pushkin's "The Covetous Knight"

Originally, Pushkin planned to use an excerpt of Derzhavin's "To Skopikhin" as the epigraph for "The Covetous Knight" ("Skupoi rytsar," written 1830, published 1836).<sup>368</sup> As shown in the manuscript, the lines Pushkin considered using were the first two of the stanza cited above—precisely those that, more than any others in the poem, display Derzhavin's reliance on the tradition of the miser fable: "Stop your living in the cellars, / Like a mole in underground ravines."<sup>369</sup> Had Pushkin placed these lines at the head of the final version of "The Covetous Knight," it might have seemed that he wished for the work to be read as a restatement of Derzhavin's message. However, Pushkin frequently uses epigraphs that point to a conclusion other than that of the text as a whole; Derzhavin's lines may therefore reveal how "The Covetous Knight" ironizes the generic conventions of the fable and answers Derzhavin's stylistic mixture of low fabular elements in a high ode.<sup>370</sup>

Having removed the epigraph from Derzhavin's poem in the final version of "The Covetous Knight," Pushkin foregrounds his importation and transformation of the European miser type. The subtitle of the play, "Scenes from Shenstone's tragicomedy *The Covetous Knight*" ("Stseny iz Chenstonovoi tragikomedii *The Covetous Knight*"), suggests that it is a translation from English.<sup>371</sup> Yet because the English writer William Shenstone (1714-1763) wrote nothing like "The Covetous Knight," Pushkin's subtitle is generally recognized as a "mystification."<sup>372</sup> The story, structure, and characters in the play do have European sources, including Molière's *The Miser* and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (c. 1598), but by masking these real sources and inventing another one, Pushkin makes the process of Russian importation and translation of European literature part of the play's literary intent. Whereas Derzhavin adapts a Horatian ode, preserves its original didactic message and allegorically addresses it to a Russian historical personage, Pushkin focuses readers' attention on the false equivalence he posits between his play and a purported source.

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<sup>368</sup> On Pushkin's literary engagements with Derzhavin, see David M. Bethea, "Pushkin, Derzhavin, and the Life of the Poet," *Realizing Metaphors: Alexander Pushkin and the Life of the Poet* (Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin Press, 1998): 137-234.

<sup>369</sup> Commentary to "Skupoi rytsar," A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh* (Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1964), 5:614.

<sup>370</sup> On Pushkin's epigraphs, see Viktor Vinogradov, "O stile Pushkina," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (Moskva: Zhurnalno-gazetnoe ob"edineniia, 1934), XVI-XVIII, 171-91. Bethea and Davydov, "Pushkin's Saturnine Cupid.," Sergei Bocharov, "Frantsuzskii epigraf k Evgeniiu Oneginu," *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 32, no. 1991 (1991): 173-88.

<sup>371</sup> Aleksandr Pushkin, "Skupoi rytsar," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1937-59), 7:99; Alexander Pushkin, "The Covetous Knight," trans. James A. Falen, *Alexander Pushkin's Little Tragedies: The Poetics of Brevity*, ed. Svetlana Evdokimova (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 305.

<sup>372</sup> Commentary to "Skupoi rytsar," A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh* (Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1964), 5:613.

This positing of questionable equivalence can also be seen in Pushkin's rendering of the title "Skupoi rytsar" as "The Covetous Knight." In fact, *skupoi* would be better translated as *miserly*: this word is more closely focused on money and better renders the dual sense of *skupoi* as not only acquisitive (greedy), but also retentive (stingy). The retentive aspect of Russian *skupost'* is especially important to its meaning. For instance, the 1822 edition of the *Dictionary of the Russian Academy (Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi)* defines the noun *skupost'* (miserliness) as "excessive thrift" (*izlishniaia berezhlivost'*), and the now obsolete adjectival form *skupyi* as "having a reprehensible attachment to stored up wealth; antonym of generous, liberal" (*imeiushchii predosuditel'nuiu priviazannost' k skoplennomy bogatstvu; protivopologaetsia chivomu, torovatomu*).<sup>373</sup> The same *Dictionary* defines the noun *skupets* (miser) as "One who, out of the love for acquisition, does not want to make even the most necessary expenditures" (*Tot, kto iz liubostiazhaniia neobkhodimo nuzhnykh izderzhkek sdelat' ne khochet*).<sup>374</sup> While a covetous knight could be one who desires more money, things, or even mistresses, a miserly one wants to store up money and is loath to let it go. The desire to retain money is essential to Pushkin's portrait of the miserly baron, who values money precisely in its stored-up, unspent form. It is not the baron's desire for more money that creates the central narrative collision between him and his son Albert, but rather his refusal to give it to his son to spend.<sup>375</sup> Moreover, the word *miserly* would better indicate the tradition of the miser type that Pushkin draws on in his work, and which he clearly identifies in the title with the adjective *skupoi*. Thus, Pushkin's claim that his play derives from "The Covetous Knight" both issues and undermines a claim to equivalence.<sup>376</sup>

Critics who have explored the connections between "The Covetous Knight" and its many European intertexts have focused mostly on Pushkin's incorporation of elements from plays by Molière and Shakespeare, leaving Pushkin's engagement with the fable tradition and Derzhavin's "To Skopikhin" largely unaccounted for. In an effort to answer the broader question of what Pushkin's interest in the miser type might be, in the pages that follow I offer a discussion of "The Covetous Knight" that highlights his disruption of the equivalence fables posit between abstract types and living people, and his creative response to Derzhavin's stylistic mixture of high and low. As we shall see, Pushkin associates both the positing of equivalence and the confusion of high and low with money, showing that his interest in the miser has to do with his interest in money itself, not as an object of reprehensible greed, but as what we might call "the great equalizer."

Written at Boldino in 1830, "The Covetous Knight" is the first installment in Pushkin's collection of experiments in dramatic characterization known as the *Little Tragedies (Malen'kie*

<sup>373</sup> Rossiiskaiia akademiia nauk, *Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi*.

<sup>374</sup> Vladimir Dal' offers a similar definition of *skupoi*: "very miserly, inappropriately and immoderately thrifty; antonym of liberal, magnanimous, generous" (*skriazhlivyi, neumestno i neumerenno berezhlivyi; protivopol. torovatyi, chiviyi, shchedryi*). Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka*.

<sup>375</sup> The miser's refusal to give money to support family members of the younger generation is a standard theme of Roman New Comedy, as seen in Plautus' *The Pot of Gold*, a play Molière reworks in *The Miser*. Molière, Introductory "Notice," *L'Avare, Oeuvres complètes*, 2:508.

<sup>376</sup> Aleksandr Dolinin suggests that the Pushkin's use of "covetous" is a reference to Shakespeare's *Henry V*, in which "covet" appears twice, first referring to a desire for money, and second to a desire for honor. According to Dolinin, Pushkin would have known that *miserly* would be the standard translation for *skupoi*, but chose *covetous* to capture the tension between money and honor that is central to his play. While Dolinin's argument is convincing, I am especially interested in the rhetorical effect of Pushkin's mistranslation. Aleksandr Dolinin, "O podzagolovke 'Skupogo rytsaria,'" in *Pushkin i Anglii*, 98.

*tragedii*).<sup>377</sup> Scholars have noted that Pushkin focuses each of the *Little Tragedies* on the psychological makeup of one character, with each of these characters dominated by a particular passion.<sup>378</sup> It has also been pointed out that by offering complex portrayals of recognizable literary types and historical personages, Pushkin turns from Neo-classical to Romantic methods of characterization.<sup>379</sup> In *Table Talk* (1834), Pushkin clarifies his understanding of these two modes by comparing the representations of miserliness in Molière’s *The Miser* and Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*:

Лица, созданные Шекспиром, не суть, как у Мольера, типы такой-то страсти, такого-то порока, но существа живые, исполненные многих страстей, многих пороков; обстоятельства развивают перед зрителем их разнообразные и разносторонние характеры. У Мольера скупой скуп—и только; у Шекспира Шейлок скуп, сметлив, мстителен, чадолюбив, остроумен.

Characters created by Shakespeare are not, like those of Molière, types of this passion or that vice, but rather living creatures, full of many passions, many vices; circumstances unfold before the viewer their unique and multifaceted characters. Molière’s miser is miserly—and that’s it; Shakespeare’s Shylock is miserly, vengeful, fatherly, witty.<sup>380</sup>

Although he wrote *Table Talk* several years after “The Covetous Knight,” Pushkin’s explication of Shakespeare’s Shylock as a “living” person with multiple contradictory emotional impulses is often read as a programmatic statement of what he was aiming for in his portrayal of the baron.<sup>381</sup> Focusing on the baron’s paradoxical character as both a miser and knight (who ought to

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<sup>377</sup> In his manuscripts, Pushkin himself describes the project in these terms, calling it an “experiment in dramatic studies” (*opyt dramaticheskikh izuchenii*). Cited in Nikolaï Vladimirovich Fridman, *Romantizm v tvorchestve A.S. Pushkina* (Moskva: Prosveshchenie, 1980). See also B. V Tomashevskii, *Pushkin i Frantsiia* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1960).

<sup>378</sup> There is no critical consensus on which passions are represented in each of the *Little Tragedies*. For instance, while Fridman identifies the passions represented in each play as “miserliness” (*skupost’*) in “The Covetous Knight,” “jealousy” (*zavist’*) in “Mozart and Salieri” (“Motsart i Salieri”), “love” (*liubov’*) in “Don Juan” (“Don Guan”), and “bravery” (*smelost’*) in “A Feast in Time of Plague” (“Pir vo vremia chumy”), Evdokimova suggests that the “dominant passions” in each play are “covetousness,” “Salierism,” “Don Juanism,” and “religious apostasy.” Vladimir Markovich, “Scholarship in the Service and Disservice of the *Little Tragedies*,” in *Alexander Pushkin’s Little Tragedies*, 74-75; Fridman, *Romantizm*, 146; Svetlana Evdokimova, “The Anatomy of the Modern Self in The Little Tragedies,” in *Alexander Pushkin’s Little Tragedies*, 108.

<sup>379</sup> Fridman, *Romantizm*, 141-54; Tomashevskii, *Pushkin i Frantsiia*, 263.

<sup>380</sup> Pushkin, “Table Talk,” *PSS*, 12:159-60.

<sup>381</sup> Tomashevskii, *Pushkin i Frantsiia*, 267; Dolinin, “O podzagolovke,” 95. In fact, Shylock is not really a miser. When Shakespeare and Molière were writing their plays, there was a conceptual separation of Christian miserliness—or avarice—and Jewish usury. As Pushkin’s conflation of Harpagon’s miserliness and Shylock’s money-lending shows, this distinction had largely collapsed by the nineteenth century. Pushkin was forming ideas for “The Covetous Knight” at least as early as 1826, when he wrote the title “Jew and Son. Count” (“Zhid i syn. Graf”) in a manuscript. This suggests that he was originally planning to write about a Jewish miser or moneylender, after the fashion of Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*. Ultimately, he made the miserly baron as a Christian, but included the Jewish usurer Solomon in the opening scene, where it is made clear that the baron’s stinginess has forced his son Albert to borrow money from Solomon in order to maintain himself at court. In this way, Pushkin shifted his work closer to the narrative model of Molière’s *The Miser*. At the top of a list of dramatic works he was planning in 1827 is the title “The Miser” (“Skupoi”), perhaps indicating Pushkin’s reorientation to Molière’s model at that time. Pushkin, Commentary to “Skupoi rytsar’,” *PSS v desiati tomakh*, 5:613. On Pushkin’s appropriation of the stereotypical figure of the Jewish moneylender, see Oleg Proskurin, “Chem Pakhnut’ chervontsy? Ob odnom

value honor and duty to his lord and family more than money, according to feudal social norms), and as a miser with a conscience, critics have often noted that he has greater psychological complexity than Molière's Harpagon, whose whole character expresses the passion for money of which he is a type.<sup>382</sup>

I would stress that while Pushkin mentions a few more passions later in the same passage, it is significant that he reflects on miserliness before any other—just as he wrote “The Covetous Knight” before the other *Little Tragedies*—and that the miser is the example he chooses in his discussion of character types. The primacy of miserliness in Pushkin's reflections on character typology suggests that he perceived it as a prime or typical example of type. As the typical type, the miser could be perceived as lifeless both in that he lacks psychological complexity and in that he was palpably hackneyed. Thus, the miser provided Pushkin with the narrative opportunity to develop his methods of characterization by enlivening a doubly dead type. As I have argued in relation to “The Queen of Spades” in Chapter 2, however, Pushkin has a penchant not only for representing complex passions and enlivening the dead, but also for restraining the passions and killing off what he has reanimated. In this regard, the miser would seem an especially appealing subject for Pushkin, because the miser comes ready-made with a narrative in which he literally dies as a result of passion that is itself characterized by restraint.

One of the ways in which Pushkin restrains his miser's passion for money is by creating a balanced architectural structure for his play. The first scene takes place in a high tower (*bashnia*) where the baron's son Albert laments the lowering effect his need for money has on his high ideals of courage and honor: money is pulling him down. The second scene goes to the opposite vertical extreme, positioning the baron in an underground vault (*podval*), where he mistakes his lowly money for lofty power: he believes money elevates him. The third scene, set on level ground at the duke's palace (*dvorets*), shows the father and son lowering themselves in the estimation of the duke, who represents the highest political authority in their region. In this way, Pushkin cancels the vertical extremes of the first two scenes with the middle ground of the third. What is particularly noteworthy about this spatial structure is that within each space, money appears as a force that is disrupting the feudal hierarchy of values. While the stylistic mixture of high and low that is visible in “To Skopikhin” was an important aspect of Pushkin's ambivalent appraisal of Derzhavin's poetry,<sup>383</sup> Pushkin answers that mixture with a formal containment of the confusion of high and low. To be sure, by elevating a lowly miser to the status of a complex character worthy of representation in a “tragedy,” Pushkin, too, mixes high and low in “The Covetous Knight.” Furthermore, even in low genres, the miser is low precisely for his high valuation of lowly money, and so any miser narrative stages the disruption of high and low. But what the miser provides for Pushkin is not the opportunity to correct the miser's passionate confusion of high and low through a didactic message, but rather to perform a creative balancing act, whereby passionate disruptions of high and low are elegantly leveled off. If, as I have

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temnom meste v 'Skupom Rytsare,' ili Intertekstual'nost' i tekstologiya.” in *Poeziia Pushkina, ili Podvizhnyi palimpsest* (Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1999), 349-75.

<sup>382</sup> Dolinin, “O podzagolovke,” 99; Evdokimova, “The Anatomy of the Modern Self, 114.

<sup>383</sup> Bethea, *Realizing Metaphors*, 149. Using a metallurgical metaphor that seems especially relevant to this discussion of miser texts, Pushkin demonstrates his ambivalence to Derzhavin in a letter in which he writes: “Derzhavin's idol, ¼ gold and ¾ lead, has yet to be assayed (Kumir Derzhavina ¼ zolotoi, ¾ svintsovyi donyne eshche ne otsenen).” Cited in Bethea, *Realizing Metaphors*, 174. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*.

suggested in Chapter 2, “The Queen of Spades” is a text that appears to tremble from its own restraint of the passions, “The Covetous Knight” maintains a poise at once dizzying and delicate.

Another way Pushkin restrains the passions of an enlivened character type in “The Covetous Knight” is by giving his miser a poetic imagination. The baron’s passion for money appears as a passion for unspent metaphorical potential. Whereas Pushkin usually employs figurative language sparingly in his own poetry, the baron’s monologue is uncharacteristically rich in metaphors. As the first word—“Like (Kak)”—boldly announces, the dominant trope of the speech is the simile:

Как молодой повеса ждет свиданья  
С какой-нибудь развратницей лукавой  
Иль душой, им обманутой, так я  
Весь день минуты ждал, когда сойду  
В подвал мой тайный, к верным сундукам.  
Счастливым день! могу сегодня я  
В шестой сундук (в сундук еще неполный)  
Горсть золота накопленного всыпать.

The way a youthful rake awaits a tryst  
With some licentious harlot or, perhaps,  
Some foolish girl that he’s seduced, so I  
All day have marked the time till I might come  
Down to my secret vault and trusty chests.  
O happy day! This evening can I pour  
In coffer number six (as yet unfilled)  
Another gathered handful of my gold.<sup>384</sup>

In this extended simile, the elderly baron compares himself to a “young rake” and figures his eagerness to visit his treasure as sexual anticipation. Here, money transforms old into young, a private scene into a lover’s tryst, and the filling of a coffer into a sexual act. The metaphorical power of money is what facilitates such comparisons. While not all gold takes the form of minted money, and in this passage the miser measures his gold simply in terms of a “handful,” later he pores over and speaks of these same coins, calling them his “doubloon[s]” (*dublon[y]*).<sup>385</sup> Furthermore, a stage direction reads, “he drops in the money” (*vsypaet den’gi*).<sup>386</sup> Thus, this gold is money. As a universal equivalent, money does double duty as a metaphor and a means to make other metaphors: it represents something (abstract value) other than what it is, and this gives it the unique ability to make disparate objects (commodities) comparable to one another in terms of price.<sup>387</sup> The baron’s collection of gold coins, then, is a store of metaphors in effect and waiting to be made.

<sup>384</sup> “Skupoi rytsar’,” 110; “The Covetous Knight,” 312.

<sup>385</sup> “Skupoi rytsar’,” 111; “The Covetous Knight,” 313.

<sup>386</sup> “Skupoi rytsar’,” 112; “The Covetous Knight,” 314. Translation modified.

<sup>387</sup> The “universal equivalent” is a commodity that has been set apart from all others in that all others “express their values” in it. In its role as universal equivalent, money makes “all commodities appear not only as

Valuing gold for its metaphorical potential to transform people and things, the baron justifies his hoarding of it by citing a principle he derived from a fable:

Не много, кажется, но понемногу  
 Сокровища растут. Читал я где-то,  
 Что царь однажды воинам своим  
 Велел снести земли по горсти в кучу,  
 И гордый холм возвысился — и царь  
 Мог с вышины с весельем озираться  
 И дол, покрытый белыми шатрами,  
 И море, где бежали корабли.  
 Так я, по горсти бедной принося  
 Привычну дань мою сюда в подвал,  
 Вознес мой холм — и с высоты его  
 Могу взирать на все, что мне подвластно.  
 Что не подвластно мне? как некий демон  
 Отселе править миром я могу;

Not much, perhaps, but by such tiny drops  
 Do mighty treasures grow. I read somewhere  
 That once a king commanded all his troops  
 To gather dirt by handfuls in a heap,  
 And thus, in time, a mighty hill arose—  
 And from that summit could the king with joy  
 Survey his valleys, decked in gleaming tents,  
 And watch his great armada ply the sea.  
 Thus I, by offering in tiny bits  
 My customary tribute to this vault,  
 Have raised my hill as well—and from its height  
 I too survey the reach of my domain.  
 And who shall set its bounds? Like some great demon,  
 From here I can control and rule the world.<sup>388</sup>

The story the baron has read and here retells takes the form of a whole fable inscribed within “The Covetous Knight.” The first one and a half lines of this passage fulfill the function of the *promythium* (the initial lines that explain the principle a fable exemplifies, an alternative to the end-position *epimythium*). Rather than condemning miserliness, however, this fable celebrates patient accumulation.

The baron recognizes this fable as an allegorical model for his own life. He attempts to follow the example it sets forth, mentally exercising his money’s ability to make him like the fictional king. “Thus I” (*Tak ia*), he says, his gold once again facilitating his comparison of himself to another person who is disparately situated. Yet while the baron’s reading of the fable about the king may demonstrate appropriate reading strategies for fables, in fact the baron’s

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qualitatively equal, as values in general, but also as values of quantitatively comparable magnitude.” Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

<sup>388</sup> “Skupoi rytsar’,” 110; “The Covetous Knight,” 312.

reading of his own situation is clearly mistaken. He imagines that his sacks of gold elevate and empower him, yet in reality they lure him to a lowly position equivalent to the lowly position of money in the feudal hierarchy of values. His love of gold puts him in conflict with the values of honor, duty, and allegiance to both his son and his lord the duke, and leads to his disgraceful death in a heated argument with his son at the palace. It seems the baron could have benefitted more from reading fables about misers, like those Derzhavin draws from in “To Skopikhin.” Like Derzhavin, Pushkin inserts fabular elements in his poetic miser text, but while Derzhavin’s poem exhorts the listener to heed the warning of the fables, Pushkin’s miser appears to be reading—or misreading—the wrong fables altogether.

The baron’s mistaken interpretation of the fable as an allegory of his own life points to a more general tendency in Pushkin’s works: namely, to posit partial equivalences between his own texts and preexisting ones. Pushkin often achieves this positing of near-equivalences by staging scenes of misreading in which his characters mistakenly believe that literary texts are applicable to their own lives.<sup>389</sup> Notably, the baron’s own valuation of money for its ability to make one thing like another resembles Pushkin’s practice of positing potential equivalents for his texts. Similar to the way the baron loves to *imagine* that his gold could be exchanged for objects, services, or power, but ultimately refuses to make any of those exchanges, Pushkin likes to suggest that his texts *might* be comparable to, or exchangeable for, others, but he ultimately withholds such a final exchange. Like the baron, Pushkin has a passion for potential equivalence.

Another way Pushkin demonstrates this passion is by presenting his miser as a man of a particular historical epoch that remains *potentially*, but not certainly, comparable to Pushkin’s own age. Whereas traditional miser fables and comedies move from the concrete to the abstract, presenting particular characters as examples of universal human traits, Pushkin directs his creative energy in the opposite direction, showing what a typical passion (miserliness) looks like in a particular historical epoch. As the Marxist critic Grigorii Gukovskii points out, Pushkin’s play details money’s destabilization of feudal values (honor and duty) in “all of Europe.”<sup>390</sup> I would note, however, that the location in what seems like “all of Europe” shows the limits of Pushkin’s historicism: he does not pin the action of “The Covetous Knight” down to a precise time or place. While his ascription of the play to Shenstone might suggest that the action takes place in England, the son’s name—Albert—appears in Pushkin’s text with French pronunciation—*Al’ber*. The baron’s name—Phillipe (*Fillip*)—is common in multiple European languages. The settings of the three scenes (tower, vault, and palace) are iconic. Pushkin uses these architectural structures to conjure up an abstractly poetic image of European feudalism; he does not prosaicize “The Covetous Knight” with geographic specificity. For this reason the play has often been interpreted as referring figuratively to historical processes underway in Russia during Pushkin’s lifetime, when, as S. M. Bondi notes, the spread of the money economy in Russia was eroding the value system of the semi-feudal Russian social structure, and, as Svetlana Evdokimova proposes, the new emphasis on individuality in the post-Napoleonic era made the miser’s egoistic project of self-empowerment representative of the strivings of the modern

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<sup>389</sup> For instance, the baron’s unfortunate reading practices resemble those of Tatiana in *Evgenii Onegin*, Samson Vyrin in “The Stationmaster” (“Stantsionnyi smotritel’,” 1830), and Lizaveta Ivanovna in “The Queen of Spades.” Of these three characters, Vyrin is most like the baron in that the text he misreads is a parable (that of the Prodigal Son), which, like a fable, is meant to give moral instruction.

<sup>390</sup> Grigorii Gukovskii, *Pushkin i problemy realisticheskogo stilia* (Moskva: Gos. izd-vo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1957), 323.

self.<sup>391</sup> For my part, I would suggest that the indeterminacy of the play's ultimate historical referent is symptomatic of Pushkin's treatment of the miser and his money as representatives of unspent metaphorical potential.

What makes it so tempting to consider the setting of "The Covetous Knight" as metaphorically equivalent to Pushkin's era is the generic pressure the miser fable exerts on the text. Aside from the lines from "To Skopikhin" Pushkin considered using as an epigraph to the work and the inscribed fable about the king in the baron's monologue, the strongest indications of the centrality of the fable to "The Covetous Knight" are the baron's death and the duke's response to that death in the closing lines. Stage comedies about misers do not end with the miser's death, but fables often do. When Pushkin's baron dies in Scene III, readers conditioned by miser fables expect to be able to understand "The Covetous Knight" as an allegory, recognizing the principle it exemplifies, but this principle remains elusive. Using his last breath to call out for the keys to his cellar—"Where are the keys? / The keys, my keys!" (*Gde kliuchi? / Kliuchi, kliuchi moi!*)—the baron expresses readers' interpretive predicament: we are left unsure where—or what—the "key" is to the text.<sup>392</sup> Moreover, the baron's words suggest there are not one, but multiple, missing keys. Pushkin does not simply present readers with a text that can be variously interpreted; instead, he uses the very signs of the miser's typical readability—his keys—to highlight the absence of a single interpretive key to "The Covetous Knight."

Similarly, the last lines of the work rely on but also disrupt the typical structure of miser fables. Having witnessed the dishonorable argument between the baron and his son that leads to the miser's death, the duke issues a final proclamation that recalls the last lines of many miser fables:

Он умер. Боже!  
Ужасный век, ужасные сердца!

He's dead. O God in Heaven!  
What dreadful times are these, what dreadful hearts!<sup>393</sup>

Whereas at the end of miser fables there is often a non-miserly character that colludes with the narrator by voicing a condemnation of excessive greed, in Pushkin's work the duke's last lines restate the open-endedness of the text. The miser is dead—that much is clear—but which "times" and whose "hearts" are "dreadful?" Do the duke's words refer only to the "times" of European feudalism, or should readers understand them to refer allegorically to contemporary Russia? Similarly, do they refer only to the "hearts" inside the play, or might they also point outside the text to "hearts" in the nineteenth century? The plural form of "times" and "hearts" reinforces the sense that "The Covetous Knight" might be a allegorical narrative, like a fable. However, like the baron's gold, whose metaphorical potential increases with every new "handful" but is never finally exchanged for anything, Pushkin's text accumulates metaphorical potential as the reader considers alternative readings of it but can settle on no one in particular. Moreover, by adapting Cicero's well-known phrase, "O tempora, o mores!" (O the times, o the customs!), Pushkin closes his play with yet another instance of near equivalence. He replaces Cicero's "customs"

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<sup>391</sup> S. M. Bondi, "Dramaticheskie proizvedeniia Pushkina," in *Sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh*, by A. S. Pushkin, vol. 4 (Moskva: Gos. izd-vo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959), 574-75; Evdokimova, "The Anatomy of the Modern Self," 106-43.

<sup>392</sup> Pushkin, "Skupoi rytsar", 113; "The Covetous Knight," 315.

<sup>393</sup> Pushkin, "Skupoi rytsar", 113; "The Covetous Knight," 315.

with the synecdoche, “hearts,” suggesting both his interest in how history shapes the passions, and his penchant for presenting his texts as partly—but not completely—equivalent to previous ones.

Thus, Pushkin responds to the Neo-classical tradition of didactic literature about miserliness with an ambivalent text that leaves readers unsure of whether the historically specific conflict between the value of money and honor in late European feudalism is analogous to—and might provide lessons about—Russian cultural tensions in the early nineteenth century. Pushkin seizes on the miser as a dead type with a predetermined meaning, giving it new life capable of meaning many things. In this way, Pushkin kills off the traditionally legible miser (indeed, the Duke’s pronouncement, “He’s dead,” points to the death of the miser as a figure meant to teach readers a clear lesson), and he both fires and checks his readers’ passion for equivalence.

### **A Russian Miser’s Miser: Plyushkin in Gogol’s *Dead Souls***

If Pushkin and his miser are fascinated by gold’s symbolic status as the supreme general equivalent, in *Dead Souls* (*Mertvye dushi*, 1842) Nikolai Gogol and his miserly pack-rat Plyushkin energetically erode the distinctions on which evaluative judgments rely. The hero Chichikov’s visit to Plyushkin’s estate is part of the disorienting encounter the novel as a whole stages between commercial and agrarian forms of value, and Gogol’s atypical treatment of the miser type shows how strange is monetary logic—the logic of the general equivalent—in Russia’s serf-based agricultural economy. As critics have noted since the novel’s publication, *Dead Souls* responds to the commercialization taking place in the Russian Empire in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>394</sup> Gogol does not depict money as displacing or having displaced serf-based agrarian forms of value, however; instead, he explores the simultaneous circulation and exchange of money, credit, deeds, words, objects, land, serfs, souls, sentiments, and moral and spiritual values.<sup>395</sup>

Throughout the first half of the novel, Chichikov travels around the Russian countryside, visiting a series of landowners and offering to take or even buy their “dead souls” (*mertvye dushi*)—serfs who have died since the last census but whom the state still counts as living, and hence taxable, property. Each landowner’s estate appears as a self-contained domestic economy that operates according to a unique logic, and Chichikov must adjust the terms of his proposal to appeal to each landowner’s sense of value. As the critic Gary Saul Morson notes, Chichikov invites the landowners—and the readers of *Dead Souls*—to participate in a “thought experiment,” in which they must reconsider the nature of economic value and its interconnection with linguistic, moral, and spiritual values.<sup>396</sup> In the first half of the nineteenth century, the main unit of wealth in Russia was the serf, and the value of a landowner’s property was calculated in

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<sup>394</sup> The most prominent of Gogol’s contemporaries to view *Dead Souls* as a response to commercialization is Stepan Shevyrev, who argues that as a person with a “passion for owning more (strast’ k priobreteniiu)” Chichikov represents the spirit of the new age. Stepan Shevyrev, “Pokhozhdeniia Chichikova, ili mertvye dushi,” poem N. V. Gogolia, Stat’ia pervaiia,” in *Russkaia kritika XVIII-XIX vekov: Khrestomatiia*, Vasilii Ivanovich Kulshov (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1978), 162. More recently, Russell Scott Valentino has explored this subject in his engaging essay, Russell Scott Valentino, “A Catalogue of Commercialism in Nikolai Gogol’s *Dead Souls*,” *Slavic Review* 57, no. 3 (Autumn 1998): 543-562.

<sup>395</sup> For a thorough discussion of problems of value and evaluation in *Dead Souls*, see Gary Saul Morson, “Gogol’s Parables of Explanation: Nonsense and Prosaics,” in *Essays on Gogol: Logos and the Russian Word* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern UP, 1992), esp. 206-15.

<sup>396</sup> Morson, “Gogol’s Parables of Explanation,” 210.

terms of the number of serfs held. Under this system, value was a material, living, and relatively immobile phenomenon: it was inseparable from human bodies and the land to which they were tied. Asking the landowners to abstract the value of serfs from bodies and land, Chichikov tries to use language—the words used to name the dead serfs—as a mobile form of money-like value that he can exchange, accumulate and transport.<sup>397</sup> Ultimately, *Dead Souls* refuses to grant any value the status of general equivalent, and there is no available standard by which to credibly assess the meaning of Gogol's variegated narrative transactions. As a miser whose interest is atypically unfocused on money, Plyushkin is a living embodiment of Gogol's disruption of general equivalency.<sup>398</sup>

Gogol presents Plyushkin as though against the background of the traditional miser type.<sup>399</sup> He introduces Plyushkin in the novel precisely as a type when, in a conversation with Chichikov, the landowner Sobakevich uses Plyushkin's name as a typical example of an extremely miserly person:

[У] меня не так, как у какого-нибудь Плюшкина: 800 душ имеет, а живет и обедает хуже моего пастуха!"

"Кто такой этот Плюшкин?" спросил Чичиков.

"Мошенник", отвечал Собакевич. "Такой скряга, какого вообразить трудно. В тюрьме колодники лучше живут, чем он: всех людей переморил голодом".

"[W]ith me it's not like with some Plyushkin: he owns eight hundred souls, yet he lives and eats worse than my shepherd!"

"Who is this Plyushkin?" asked Chichikov.

"A crook," replied Sobakevich. "Such a niggard, it's hard to imagine. Jailbirds in prison live better than he does: he's starved all his people to death..."<sup>400</sup>

Using the phrase "some Plyushkin," Sobakevich inaugurates what has become a Russian tradition of using Plyushkin's name to refer to people with extremely miserly or hoarding tendencies. More than any other character name in *Dead Souls*, Plyushkin has gained broad typological currency in the Russian language. The *Great Dictionary of the Russian Language (Bol'shoi tolkovyi slovar' russkogo iazyka)* says the appellation Plyushkin is used to speak "About an extremely miserly, greedy person" (*O chrezмерно skupom, zhadnom cheloveke*).<sup>401</sup>

<sup>397</sup> On *Dead Souls* and the rise of "symbolic, changeable, and conventionally determined value, with all its attendant mobility and 'rootlessness'," see Valentino, "A Catalogue of Commercialism," 546.

<sup>398</sup> Valentino suggests that the sequence of landowners in *Dead Souls* represents the historical progression to a money-based economy in Russia, and he reads Plyushkin as the culmination of this process. I would note, however, that Plyushkin does not display a properly commercial ethic: he does not privilege money above other forms of value, and he even forgoes the opportunity to profit monetarily from his estate. Valentino, "A Catalogue of Commercialism," 560.

<sup>399</sup> Here I am extending and reorienting Morson's suggestion that Gogol creates his characters *against* existing literary conventions of characterization. Whereas Morson explores Gogol's creation of characters that seem especially empty to readers accustomed to the more deeply developed interiority of characters in novels, I suggest that with Plyushkin, Gogol fills a traditionally hollow character type so full that he becomes almost unrecognizable. Morson, "Gogol's Parables of Explanation," 234.

<sup>400</sup> N. V. Gogol, *Mertvye dushi, Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1978), 5: 94-95; Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 1997), 98.

<sup>401</sup> "Plyushkin," *Bol'shoi tolkovyi slovar' russkogo iazyka* (SPb.: Norint, 1998).

Dostoevsky uses Plyushkin's name this way in *Petersburg Dreams in Verse and Prose* (*Peterburgskie snovideniia v stikhakh i proze*, 1861), calling a man he read about in the newspaper who lived poorly until his death and was discovered to have hoarded a great amount of money a "new Plyushkin" (*novyi Pliushkin*).<sup>402</sup> In a rare instance of Russian cultural paradigms spreading to the west, the phrase "Plyushkin syndrome" has recently begun appearing in English.<sup>403</sup>

The unique ability of Plyushkin's name to become part of everyday language is at least partly due to the fact that, unlike the other characters in *Dead Souls*, Plyushkin belongs to ancient typological tradition (that of the miser).<sup>404</sup> His name designates a type that both predates and survives his particular instantiation of it. Setting Plyushkin apart from the misers before him, however, is the extremity of his miserliness. Sobakevich indicates this extremity when he calls Plyushkin a *skriaga*: this is a near synonym of the standard words for miser, *skupets* and *skupoi*, with the difference being one of degree: a *skriaga* is an *extremely* miserly person.<sup>405</sup> Nevertheless, Sobakevich finds the extreme connotations of *skriaga* insufficient to describe Plyushkin; he calls him "Such a niggard, it's hard to imagine" (*Takoi skriaga, kakogo voobrazit' trudno*). This statement presents the paradoxicality of Plyushkin's typicality: on the one hand, he is a character belonging to a well-established type, and so thus easily imagined; on the other hand, his miserliness is so extreme that he becomes difficult for anyone—the other characters, the narrator, and the readers of Gogol's work—to imagine or understand. He is so over-determined that he becomes indeterminate.

Another indication of this indeterminacy is when Chichikov asks one of Sobakevich's serfs how to get to Plyushkin's estate. The serf replies with a coarse description of Plyushkin that the narrator censors and shortens to the adjective "patchy" (*zplatannoi*), having omitted the noun it was meant to qualify.<sup>406</sup> The narrator's explanation that he omitted the noun referring to the miser because of its impoliteness leads directly into his famous celebration of "the aptly

<sup>402</sup> Dostoevsky uses the terms "new Plyushkin (*novyi Pliushkin*)" and "new Harpagon (*novyi Garpagon*)" interchangeably to describe the same man, showing that he considers Gogol's and Molière's misers to be examples of the same essential type. Fedor Dostoevskii, "Peterburgskie snovideniia v stikhakh i proze," *PSS v 30-i tomakh*, 19:72.

<sup>403</sup> A Google search for Plyushkin turns up a short article advocating for the adoption of the phrase "Plyushkin Syndrome" in English; references to a video game called "Plyushkin Syndrome"; and a blog post titled "Delta Burke and Andy Warhol Were Plyushkins?" E. Cybulska, "Plyushkin's Not-Diogenes Syndrome," *Psychiatric Bulletin* 2 (1998): 319-20. "Plyushkin Syndrome 1.1 is out!" Clockwork Brains Blog, entry posted November 17, 2007, <http://clockwork-brains.blogspot.com/2007/11/plyushkin-syndrome-11-is-out.html> (accessed March 26, 2011). Jacqueline Kasuya, "Delta Burke and Andy Warhol Were Plyushkin's?" Hoardhouse Blog, entry posted February 12, 2009, <http://blog.hoardhouse.com/tag/plyushkin/> (accessed March 26, 2011).

<sup>404</sup> In an article about Gogol, Belinsky discusses the ability of a character's name to cross over into everyday language as the hallmark of a true type. He names several of Gogol's characters that he feels possess this power, but does not mention Plyushkin, who by now has eclipsed all of Gogol's other characters with the durability it has displayed as a noun. Belinskii, "O russkikh povestiakh," 296. In a later essay, Belinsky celebrates another character with some miserly traits—Korobochka—as an exemplary type in *Dead Souls*. Vissarion Belinskii, "Literaturnyi razgovor, podslushannyi v knizhnoi lavke," *V. G. Belinskii. Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1953), 6:359.

<sup>405</sup> The second edition of the *Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi* explains the word *skriaga* as follows: "In colloquial speech this designates an extremely miserly person (V prostorechii nazyvaetsia tak chelovek chrezvychaino skupyi." "Skriaga," *Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi po azbychnomu poriadku raspolozhenii* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskoi Rossiiskoi Akademii, 1822; reprinted Odense, Denmark: University of Odense, 1971).

<sup>406</sup> Gogol', *Mertvye dushi*, 103; *Dead Souls*, 108.

spoken Russian word” (*metko skazannoe russkoe slovo*).<sup>407</sup> While the lengthy discussion of the missing “word” in this passage is an instance of Gogol’s general tendency to accumulate signs at the expense of referents, it is notable that the missing referent here is a miser—Plyushkin—whose own accumulation undermines the meaning of all signs of value.<sup>408</sup> As is evident when Chichikov first sees Plyushkin, the latter’s extreme miserliness has obscured the very signs by which miserliness is typically recognized:

У одного из строений Чичиков скоро заметил какую-то фигуру, которая начала вздорить с мужиком, приехавшим на телеге. Долго он не мог распознать, какого пола была фигура: баба или мужик. Платье на ней было совершенно неопределенное, похожее очень на женский капот; на голове колпак, какой носят деревенские дворовые бабы; только один голос показался ему несколько сиплым для женщины. . . . По висевшим у ней за поясом ключам и по тому, что она бранила мужика довольно поносными словами, Чичиков заключил, что это, верно, ключница.

By one of the buildings Chichikov soon noticed some figure, who had begun squabbling with the muzhik on the cart. For a long time he could not make out the figure’s sex, male or female. It was dressed in something completely indefinite, much like a woman’s housecoat, with a cap on its head such as household serf wenches wear in the country, only the voice seemed to him rather too husky for a woman. . . . By the keys hanging from her belt, and by the fact that she was scolding the muzhik in rather abusive terms, Chichikov concluded that this must be the housekeeper.<sup>409</sup>

Appearing as “some figure” wearing “something completely indefinite,” Plyushkin is of uncertain gender and social position, and is indeed “hard to imagine.” He is also “patchy,” as Sobakevich’s serf said: he is pieced together out of feminine, masculine, peasant, landowner, housekeeper, and typical miser scraps. As an elderly man of considerable means who carries keys, Plyushkin fits the description of the typical miser, but his unwillingness to spend money or let anything go has made him ready to wear anything and appear however he may, resulting in the illegibility of this traditionally legible character type. Indeed, Chichikov misreads the keys that firmly establish Plyushkin as a miser, believing they signal Plyushkin’s status as a female housekeeper instead. Thus, Plyushkin is a miser who, like his overgrown garden, has essentially gone to seed: the traces of the miser type remain in him, but they have been effaced by the extremity of his hoarding instinct.

Throughout Chichikov’s visit to his estate, Plyushkin appears now a typical, now an atypical miser. As Chichikov enters the house, the narrator compares it to a cellar: “He stepped into the dark, wide front hall, from which cold air blew as from a cellar” (*On vstupil v temnye shirokie seni, ot kotorykh podulo kholodom, kak iz pogreba*).<sup>410</sup> The word *pogreb* (cellar) is related to *pogrebenie* (burial), and in archaic usage it also designated a dungeon; this space befits

<sup>407</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*, 104; *Dead Souls*, 109.

<sup>408</sup> Although Cathy Popkin identifies the paradoxically accumulative yet referent-less logic of Gogol’s prose, she does not, as I do, view the novel in terms of the more general economic orientation of Russian literature in the 1830s-1840s. Cathy Popkin, *The Pragmatics of Insignificance: Chekhov, Zoshchenko, Gogol* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1993).

<sup>409</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*; *Dead Souls*, 114.

<sup>410</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*, 109; *Dead Souls*, 114.

a typical miser, who, according to tradition, keeps his money in confined, grave-like, underground spaces. Yet Plyushkin is a radically atypical miser in that he hoards not money but a “various multitude of things” (*mnozhestvo vsiakoi vsiachiny*).<sup>411</sup> Entering Plyushkin’s house, Chichikov is “struck by the disorder” (*porazhen predstavshim besporiadkom*) in the living room.<sup>412</sup> Broken furniture is heaped upon a table, and the bureau is cluttered with trash:

куча исписанных мелко бумажек, накрытых мраморным позеленевшим прессом с яичком наверху, какая-то старинная книга в кожаном переплете с красным обрезом, лимон, весь высохший, ростом не более лесного ореха, отломленная ручка кресел, рюмка с какою-то жидкостью и тремя мухами, накрытая письмом, кусочек сургучика, кусочек где-то поднятой тряпки, два пера, запачканные чернилами, высохшие как в чахотке, зубочистка, совершенно пожелтевшая, которою хозяин, может быть, ковырял в зубах своих еще до нашествия на Москву французов.

a stack of papers written all over in a small hand, covered by a marble paperweight, gone green, with a little egg on top of it, some ancient book in a leather binding with red edges, a completely dried-up lemon no bigger than a hazelnut, the broken-off arm of an armchair, a glass with some sort of liquid and three flies in it, covered by a letter, a little piece of sealing wax, a little piece of rag picked up somewhere, two ink-stained pens, dried up as if with consumption, a toothpick, turned completely yellow, with which the master had probably picked his teeth even before the invasion of Moscow by the French.<sup>413</sup>

Plyushkin’s hoard could not be more different than the baron’s in “The Covetous Knight.” Rather than sacks of gold tucked away for safekeeping in the sacred space of a cellar, Plyushkin’s treasure is collection of things that were once useful but are now worthless, and which are piled up in a room to which Chichikov is freely admitted. Whereas the baron treasures gold—a universal equivalent of symbolic as well as monetary value—there is no discernable logic governing Plyushkin’s valuation of these objects.

Indeed, one pile of junk in the corner is so dusty Chichikov cannot even determine what is in it:

В углу комнаты была навалена на полу куча того, что поглубе и что недостойно лежать на столах. Что именно находилось в куче, решить было трудно, ибо пыли на ней было в таком изобилии, что руки всякого касавшегося становились похожими на перчатки.

On the floor in the corner of the room was heaped a pile of whatever was more crude and unworthy of lying on the tables. Precisely what was in this pile it was hard to tell, for

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<sup>411</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*, 109; *Dead Souls*, 115.

<sup>412</sup> Vladimir Golstein explores Plyushkin’s disorderliness in relation to demonic creation of chaos. For my part, I am interested in Plyushkin’s disorderly hoarding as a response to the typical miser’s hyper-orderly valuation of money. Whereas the typical miser is obsessed with monetary logic, Plyushkin’s only logic is hoarding itself. Vladimir Golstein, “Landowners in *Dead Souls*: Or the Tale of How Gogol Blessed What He Wanted to Curse,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 41, no. 2 (July 1, 1997): 243-257.

<sup>413</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*, 109; *Dead Souls*, 115.

there was such an abundance of dust on it that the hands of anyone who touched it resembled gloves.<sup>414</sup>

Everything that enters this pile becomes indistinguishable from everything else—a hand that approaches the pile loses its specificity as a hand, becoming a dusty glove instead. While in “The Covetous Knight,” gold shines as the general equivalent that can be exchanged for anything else, in *Dead Souls*, it is the act of hoarding itself that renders all things equivalent. Miser narratives always explore what happens when a means is valued as an end in itself, but what makes Gogol’s miser unique is that for him, hoarding—not money—is the means that becomes an end. As an indiscriminate hoarder, Plyushkin is a miser’s miser: his miserliness becomes its own self-perpetuating, self-justifying rationale.<sup>415</sup>

Further distinguishing Plyushkin from the typical miser, his paradoxical accumulation of goods actually results in a loss of their value: they are rotting, breaking, disintegrating. Miser narratives typically represent hoarding money as a wasteful activity that impoverishes the miser both spiritually and in terms of quality of life. What is at stake in *Dead Souls*, however, is not the miser’s traditional overvaluation of money, but the conflation of monetary and non-monetary logic. Plyushkin treats goods as if they were money—as if accumulating them could increase their value—and his hoarding drains the value not only from his own life, but from everyone and everything on his estate. As the possessor of around eight hundred serfs, Plyushkin is the wealthiest of the landowners Chichikov meets, and his storehouses and outbuildings are filled with produce and tools.<sup>416</sup> Yet rather than involving himself in estate management, Plyushkin takes daily walks around his property, gathering everything he finds, even stealing his serfs’ belongings, and bringing all and sundry back to his house.<sup>417</sup> Unwilling to let even the most trivial object slip from his possession, he actually refuses to sell the produce of his estate, preferring to let it go to waste instead:

[С] каждым годом уходили из вида, более и более, главные части хозяйства, и мелкий взгляд его обращался к бумажкам и перышкам, которые он собирал в своей комнате; неуступчивее становился он к покупщикам, которые приезжали забирать у него хозяйственные произведения, покупщики торговались, торговались и наконец бросили его вовсе, сказавши, что это бес, а не человек; сено и хлеб гнили, клади и стоги обращались в чистый навоз.

[E]ach year more and more of the main parts of management were lost sight of, and his petty glance turned to the little scraps and feathers he collected in his room; he grew more unyielding with the buyers who came to take the products of his estate; the buyers bargained, bargained, and finally dropped him altogether, saying he was a devil, not a man; the hay and wheat rotted, the stooks and ricks turned to pure dung.<sup>418</sup>

Plyushkin’s idiosyncratic saving of things whose value decreases over time points to the confusion *Dead Souls* effects between the logics of serf-based agrarian and money-based

<sup>414</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*, 110; *Dead Souls*, 115.

<sup>415</sup> In Morson’s words, “stinginess is its own reward.” Morson, “Gogol’s Parables of Explanation,” 215.

<sup>416</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*, 111; *Dead Souls*, 117.

<sup>417</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*, 112; *Dead Souls*, 117.

<sup>418</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*, 113-14; *Dead Souls*, 119.

commercial economies. What makes money able to serve as a universal equivalent is, first of all, its relative durability. Coins and, to a lesser but still significant extent, bills are meant to maintain their value over time. Of course, their value may fall, but this has more to do with the workings of financial institutions than with the material makeup of the money itself. Barring fluctuations in price levels and the money supply, the value of money increases in direct proportion to its quantity. The value of agricultural produce, by contrast, will inevitably be rendered null if it is stored so long it begins to decompose. Notably, Plyushkin's bizarre combination of monetary and non-monetary economic objects and principles enables Chichikov's scheme of buying as many dead souls as possible, as Plyushkin's ruination of his own estate has starved so many serfs that he has more dead ones to sell than do any of the other landowners.

Gogol represents Plyushkin as an atypical Russian as well as an atypical miser. The author implicitly acknowledges the foreign origin of the miser type when he describes Plyushkin as out of place in Russia, where the people tend toward hospitality and prodigality rather than stinginess and saving:

Должно сказать, что подобное явление редко попадает на Руси, где всё любит скорее развернуться, нежели съежиться, и тем разительнее бывает оно, что тут же в соседстве подвернется помещик, кутящий во всю ширину русской удали и барства, прожигающий, как говорится, насквозь жизнь.

It must be said that one rarely comes upon such a phenomenon in Russia, where everything prefers rather to expand than to shrink, and it is all the more striking when, right there in the neighborhood, there happens to be a landowner who carouses to the full breadth of Russian dash and largesse—who, as they say, burns up his whole life.<sup>419</sup>

Next, the narrator goes on to describe this unnamed neighboring landowner whom he considers to represent a more Russian style of life characterized by the hosting of countless visitors, theatrical performances, and balls. Yet rather than simply inserting a miser of the European (money-centered) type into a non-native habitat in the Russian countryside, Gogol Russifies the miser type miser by making Plyushkin a landowner who values the goods on his estate more than money. Plyushkin's hoarding of goods appears as Russian—in the sense of agrarian—form of miserliness, and it demonstrates Gogol's anomalous mixture of culturally coded social and economic values.

It might be tempting to consider Plyushkin not as a miser at all, but simply as a different sort of character altogether (a hoarder), if it were not for Gogol's bestowal of so many recognizable elements of the miser type on him. Almost as though wishing to clarify that Plyushkin really does derive from this typological tradition, Gogol provides a short biography for him. (None of the other landowners receive such treatment.) Plyushkin's biography makes it clear that he was once a "thrifty manager" (*berezhlivym khoziainom*) whose "wise parsimony" (*mudr[aia] skupost[']*) eventually turned into an extreme unwillingness to spend money or give it to his children.<sup>420</sup> The narrator gives no clear explanation for why Plyushkin developed such stinginess, but simply states that this took place after Plyushkin's wife died and passed the keys of the estate to him. Here, the traditional signs of miserliness are cited as its cause. Similarly, the narrator recounts that Plyushkin's miserliness grew more extreme as he aged and was abandoned

<sup>419</sup> Gogol', *Mertvye dushi*, 114; *Dead Souls*, 120.

<sup>420</sup> Gogol', *Mertvye dushi*, 112; *Dead Souls*, 118.

by his children: “Solitary life gave ample nourishment to his avarice, which, as is known, has a wolf’s appetite and grows more insatiable the more it devours” (*Odinokaia zhizn’ dala sytnuiu pishchu skuposti, kotoraiia, kak izvestno, imeet volchii golod i chem bolee pozhiraet, tem stanovitsia nenasytnee*).<sup>421</sup> The narrator notes the old age, estranged children, solitary life, and avarice that are common features of the miser type as sources of Plyushkin’s miserliness.

Moreover, once he became miserly, Plyushkin developed this self-perpetuating feature to such an extreme degree that “his petty glance turned to the little scraps and feathers he collected in his room” (*melkii vzgliad ego obrashchalsia k bumazhkam i peryshkam, kotorye on sobiral v svoei komnate*). Thus, money lost its privileged status as the most important thing Plyushkin wished to save.<sup>422</sup> While many critics believe Plyushkin’s life story humanizes and animates this otherwise deathly, wasted person, I would stress that this biography has the double effect of rendering Plyushkin both dead and alive.<sup>423</sup> Firmly establishing Plyushkin as an atypically extreme example of the miser type, the life story associates Plyushkin with the typical miser’s physical and spiritual decay, and his persistent ability to reincarnate in new miser texts. As a moribund yet seemingly eternal figure, Plyushkin is a very uncanny example of the sort of “familiar stranger” (*znakomyi neznakomets*) Belinsky calls for in his discussion of Gogolian types.<sup>424</sup>

The comparison of Plyushkin’s avarice to a hungry wolf cited in the above paragraph recalls the animal metaphors in fables, thus associating Plyushkin with that most ancient form of miser narrative. As he does with the other landowners in *Dead Souls*, Gogol employs a variety of animal metaphors in his description of Plyushkin and his estate. For instance, the narrator relates how young Plyushkin, “like an industrious spider, ran busily yet efficiently to all ends of his managerial spiderweb” (*kak trudoliubivyi pauk, begal khlopotlivo, no rastoropno, po vsem kontsam svoei khoziaistvennoi pautiny*).<sup>425</sup> Another example is one of the most striking metaphors in the whole novel—the comparison of Plyushkin’s eyes to mice:

маленькие глазки еще не потухнули и бегали из-под высоко выросших бровей, как мыши, когда, высунувши из темных нор остренькие морды, насторожа уши и моргая усом, они высматривают, не затаился ли где кот или шалун мальчишка, и нюхают подозрительно самый воздух.

his small eyes were not yet dim and darted from under his high arched eyebrows like mice when, poking their sharp little snouts from their dark holes, pricking up their ears and twitching their whiskers, they spy out whether there is a cat or a mischievous boy in hiding, and sniff the very air suspiciously.<sup>426</sup>

This incredible simile demonstrates Gogol’s grotesque disruption of all distinctions: as human eyeballs become animals with eyeballs, parts for seeing become wholes that have their own parts for seeing, hearing, feeling, and smelling. If in “The Covetous Knight,” Pushkin is interested in

<sup>421</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*, 113; *Dead Souls*, 119.

<sup>422</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*, 113-14; *Dead Souls*, 119.

<sup>423</sup> See, for instance, Shevryev, “Pokhozhdeniia Chichikova, ili mertvye dushi,” poema N. V. Gogolia, *Stat’ia vtoraiia*,” 174; and Iu[rrii] Mann, *Poetika Gogolia* (Moscow: Khudozh. lit, 1978).

<sup>424</sup> See the first epigraph to this chapter.

<sup>425</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*, 112; *Dead Souls*, 118.

<sup>426</sup> Gogol’, *Mertvye dushi*, 111; *Dead Souls*, 116.

metaphorical exchanges that never quite take place, Gogol is interested in metaphors that multiply and mutate.

Insofar as it may be considered to refer back to the tradition of the fable, this simile-turned metonymy transforms Plyushkin's eyes—what ought to be the 'window of his soul'—into a reflection of his typological origin instead.<sup>427</sup> The parts that become wholes in the comparison of Plyushkin's eyes to mice may also figure the structure of *Dead Souls*, which includes many narrative parts—the visits to the landowners' estates—strung together to make a whole. At least one of these parts—the visit to Plyushkin—has evolved from the miser fable (itself a whole) into a new kind of creature (a part in Gogol's work that has a life of its own, yet which also seems to be a miniature image of the whole work). With its sensational upset of human and animal sensory parts and wholes, this animal metaphor run wild points to just how distinct Plyushkin is from misers found in fables. As a notoriously illegible character whose hoarding allies him with both the hero and the author of *Dead Souls*, Plyushkin challenges readers who might wish to extrapolate any sort of message from the text.

As critics have pointed out, Gogol may have drawn ideas for the plot structure of *Dead Souls* from Vasilii Nareznyi's (1780-1825) *Aristion, or Reeducation (Aristion, ili Perevosptanie*, 1822), a novel about a dissolute young Russian who is given an educational tour of several neighboring estates.<sup>428</sup> In Nareznyi's novel, the landowners of the first three estates represent particular vices (one of these landowners is a miser), and the fourth represents virtue; each visit ends with a didactic conclusion drawn by Kassian, the character responsible for Aristion's moral education. These last lines of each visit, which recall the concluding lines of fables in that they provide readers with lessons to take from the text, have no analog in the endings of the parts of *Dead Souls* dedicated to the landowners. Indeed, far from capping the chapter on Plyushkin with a lesson, the narrator shows Chichikov (who has profited from Plyushkin's ruinous hoarding) returning to town "in the merriest of spirits" (*v samom veselom raspolozhenii dukha*), having supper, and falling asleep "the way that they alone sleep who are so fortunate as to know nothing of hemorrhoids, or fleas, or overly powerful mental abilities" (*kak spiat odni tol'ko te schastlivtsy, kotorye ne vedaiut ni gemorroia, ni blokh, ni slishkom sil'nykh umstvennykh sposobnostei*).<sup>429</sup> Whereas in fables and in Nareznyi's novel, characters who observe misers provide readers with judgments about them, Chichikov gives readers no indication of what they should think about Plyushkin; instead, his behavior suggests that not thinking too hard about the miser's meaning is the most pleasant course to take.

Nevertheless, Gogol's notes and letters about *Dead Souls* make it clear that he did envision his novel as a work that could promote the moral betterment of Russia, and at one point, Plyushkin figured chiefly in his plans to realize that goal. In a letter addressed to N. N. Iazykov in *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends (Izbrannye mesta iz perepiski s druž'iami*, 1847), he writes that the lyric poet must call to the "sleeping man" (*dremlushchemu*

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<sup>427</sup> Animal metaphors like these are probably what prompted Gogol's contemporary Stepan Shevyrev to read *Dead Souls* as though through the prism of the fable tradition. In his essay about Gogol's novel, Shevyrev claims that each of the landowners is like an animal. While in some cases, such as the narrator's repeated assertions that Sobakevich is like a "bear," Gogol himself compares the characters to animals, Shevyrev takes the liberty of assigning animals even to the characters whom Gogol does not describe in such terms. Shevyrev, "Pokhozhdeniia Chichikova, ili mertvye dushi," poema N. V. Gogolia, Stat'ia pervaiia," 164.

<sup>428</sup> Vasilii Vasil'evich Gippius, *Gogol'* (Leningrad: Mysl', 1924). 139. Iurii Mann, "U istokov russkogo romana," in *Sobranie sochinenii v dvukh tomakh*, by V. T. Nareznyi (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1983), 1:31-32.

<sup>429</sup> Gogol', 124, 126; *Dead Souls*, 131-32.

*cheloveku*)—by which he means one without moral and spiritual awareness—in order to “save his poor soul” (*spasal svoiu bednuiu dushu*).<sup>430</sup> He alludes to a final message that Plyushkin is to deliver in the third volume of *Dead Souls* as an example of what the lyric poet might say to this “sleeping man,” who recalls the sleeping Chichikov after his visit to Plyushkin’s estate: “Oh, if you could read to him what my Plyushkin will say, if (only) I attain the third volume of *Dead Souls!*” (*O, esli b ty mog skazat’ emu to, chto dolzhen skazat’ moi Plyushkin, esli doberus’ do tret’ego toma ‘Mertvykh dush!’*).<sup>431</sup> This suggests that Gogol saw Plyushkin as a character with both a special moral value, and an ability to speak the words the author wished he could express in *Dead Souls*. And yet, these words Gogol hopes will come from Plyushkin remain—like the censored noun Sobakevich’s serf attaches to “patchy”—described and celebrated, but never uttered. With the rest of the novel unfinished, and Plyushkin’s portrait remaining forever as it is in the first volume, this miser’s miser is less apt to redeem readers than he is to horrify—or thrill—them with his grotesque destabilization of all distinct forms of value.

### The Miser Never Dies: Dostoevsky’s “Mr. Prokharchin”

In “Mr. Prokharchin” (“Gospodin Prokharchin,” 1846), Dostoevsky engages with Pushkin’s and Gogol’s incarnations of the miser type and responds to contemporary Russian critical debates about the aesthetic value of Natural School poetics.<sup>432</sup> These debates are marked by critics’ pervasive use of economic metaphors to describe the literature of the day. Those who were unsympathetic to the Natural School used economic rhetoric to lambast it, referring time and again to its overvaluation of the petty cares of petty people. For instance, in “All Kinds of Journal Things” (“Zhurnal’naia vsiakaia vsiachina,” 1846) the editor of *The Northern Bee* newspaper Faddei Bulgarin speaks sarcastically of the “treasures” (*sokrovishcha*) Natural School writers imagine they are “storing up” (*kopiat*) in the “corners” of Petersburg.<sup>433</sup> For their part, proponents of the Natural School spoke of their literary goals in economic terms. For instance, in his 1845 introduction to the seminal Natural School collection *Physiology of Petersburg*, Belinsky explains that the “poverty” (*bednost’*) of Russian literature, of which he had written in previous essays, consists not in a lack of great talents; in fact, he claims that Russian literature is “undoubtedly richer in works of genius than in works of ordinary talents” (*genial’nyimi proizvedeniami edva li ne gorazdo bogache, chem proizvedeniami obyknovennykh talantov*).<sup>434</sup>

<sup>430</sup> N[ikolai] V[assil’evich] Gogol, “Izbrannye mesta iz perepiski s druz’iami,” in *Sobranie sochinenii v semi tomakh*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1978). 245; Nikolai Gogol, *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*, trans. Jesse Zeldin (Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 87.

<sup>431</sup> Gogol, “Izbrannye mesta iz perepiski s druz’iami,” 246; Gogol, *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*, 87.

<sup>432</sup> “The Covetous Knight” captivated Dostoevsky, and his literary engagements with it continue throughout his career. See A. L. Bem, “Skupoi rytsar’ v tvorchestve Dostoevskogo,” *O Dostoevskom: Sbornik statei* (Praga: Sklad izd. F. Svoboda, 1929): 82-123. Susanne Fusso, “The Weight of Human Tears: The Covetous Knight and A Raw Youth,” in *Alexander Pushkin’s Little Tragedies: The Poetics of Brevity*, ed. Svetlana Evdokimova (Madison, Wis: U of Wisconsin Press, 2003): 229-42. I have found no sustained investigation of “Mr. Prokharchin” in relation to the figure of Plyushkin in *Dead Souls*. On “Mr. Prokharchin” and Dostoevsky’s critique of the Natural School, see Meyer, “Dostoevskij, Naturalist Poetics.”

<sup>433</sup> Faddei Bulgarin, “Zhurnal’naia vsiakaia vsiachina,” *Severnaiia pchela* (St. Petersburg, November 23, 1846), No. 265.

<sup>434</sup> Vissarion Belinsky, “Introduction,” *Petersburg: The Physiology of a City*, ed. Nikolai Alekseevich Nekrasov, trans. Thomas Gaiton Marullo (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 7-9, trans. modified; Vissarion Belinskii, “Vstuplenie,” *Fiziologiiia Peterburga*, ed. V. I. Kuleshov (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), 8-9.

Belinsky feels more writers of “ordinary talent” are necessary to increase the “wealth” (*bogatsv[o]*) of Russian literature and to satisfy the reading public’s “vital demand” (*nasushchnuiu potrebnost’*) for material.<sup>435</sup>

For Belinsky, Gogol’s works offer the supreme example that other writers should try to follow in their efforts to uncover the typical characteristics of contemporary Russian society. Yet Belinsky acknowledges that few writers can achieve the Gogolian standard, and so he presents *Physiology of Petersburg* as a humbler model for them to imitate. In so doing, Belinsky recommends that Russian writers follow the example of their contemporary French counterparts, who provide French readers with copious amounts of “light literature” (*legkuiu literaturu*) in the form of physiological sketches.<sup>436</sup> Thus, the “poverty” of Russian literature is a problem of quantity rather than quality, and extending his use of economic discourse, one might say he advocates the ‘accumulation’ of works patterned after the type of Gogol or, at the very least, after the French physiological sketch.<sup>437</sup> Whether they condemn or call for the literary accumulation and exposure of typically petty people and details, critics of the day might be said to invoke both the miser’s passionate desire to stockpile signs of questionable value, and the public’s desire to expose his hidden riches.

In “Mr. Prokharchin,” Dostoevsky channels the poetics of accumulation and exposure that was already in circulation in 1840s literary criticism into a highly metaliterary miser narrative that investigates the Natural School aesthetics of typification. By revealing that a typical petty clerk is in fact a miser with a secret treasure, Dostoevsky models the process of abstraction whereby writers expose the typical value of petty characters and details. The first lines of the story establish the hero Prokharchin as a petty clerk in the tradition of Akaky Akakievich from Gogol’s “The Overcoat” (“Shinel’,” 1842):

В квартире Устиньи Федоровны, в уголке самом темном и скромном, помещался Семен Иванович Прохарчин, человек уже пожилой, благомыслящий и непьющий. Так как господин Прохарчин, при мелком чине своем, получал жалованья в совершенную меру своих служебных способностей, то Устинья Федоровна никаким образом не могла иметь с него более пяти рублей за квартиру помесечно.

In the darkest and humblest corner of Ustinya Fyodorovna’s flat lived Semyon Ivanovitch Prohartchin, a well-meaning elderly man who did not drink. Since Mr. Prohartchin was of a very humble grade in the service, and received a salary strictly proportionate to his official capacity, Ustinya Fyodorovna could not get more than five roubles a month from him for his lodging.<sup>438</sup>

Prokharchin’s “humble” home in a “corner” of Petersburg, his landlady, his “humble” rank, and his apparent poverty and good behavior make him resemble not only Akaky Akakievich, but also the countless petty clerks produced by Gogol’s imitators in the Natural School.<sup>439</sup>

<sup>435</sup> Belinsky, “Introduction,” 8; Belinskii, “Vstuplenie,” 9, translation modified.

<sup>436</sup> Belinsky, “Introduction,” 3; Belinskii, “Vstuplenie,” 6.

<sup>437</sup> Belinsky uses the term “sketch” (*ocherk*) in his discussion of the kind of literature he is promoting. On the importance of the French physiological sketch to early Russian Realism, see Tseitlin, *Stanovlenie realizma*.

<sup>438</sup> Fedor Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” *PSS v 30-i tomakh* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972), 1:240; “Mr. Prohartchin,” trans. Constance Garnett, *The Short Stories of Dostoevsky* (New York: The Dial Press, 1957), 3.

<sup>439</sup> The word “corner” in particular does appear in Gogol’s story, but features in the title of Nekrasov’s story “Petersburg Corners” (“Peterburgskie ugly”) included in the *Physiology of Petersburg* collection.

By the time Dostoevsky was writing his story, Russian literature had accumulated so many examples of this type that it had become perceptibly clichéd.<sup>440</sup> In “Mr. Prokharchin,” Dostoevsky presents the petty clerk precisely as a cliché: “sitting in his seat with his mouth open and his pen in the air, as though frozen or petrified, [he] looked more like the shadow of a rational being than that rational being itself” (*sidia na meste s razinutym rtom i podniatym v vozdukh perom, kak budto zastyvshii ili okamenevshii, pokhodit bolee na ten' razumnogo sushchestva, chem na to zhe razumnoe sushchestvo*).<sup>441</sup> The clerk's pen is emblematic of his fate as a copyist who has been repeatedly copied, and is this type's counterpart to the miser's endlessly discovered keys. With a frozen, petrified body, as a “shadow of a rational being,” Prokharchin is so typical that he appears almost as a ghost. Indeed, observing him in this pose, the other characters note that there is “a great deal that was fantastic about him” (*mnogo v nem fantasticheskogo*).<sup>442</sup> Prokharchin is a “fantastic” figure because he resembles Akaky Akakievich, who becomes a ghost at the end of “The Overcoat,” and also because there were so many imitations of Akaky floating around in Russian literature of the mid-1840s that they may all be seen as spectral shades of Gogol's character. Dostoevsky responds to this “ghostification” of the petty clerk by explicitly associating ghostliness with the accumulation of types. Whereas the fantastic character of texts belonging to the “Petersburg myth” are often explained with reference to the city's own seemingly fantastical characteristics, I would suggest that in “Mr. Prokharchin,” the fantastic emerges in response to the dominant aesthetic practices of the day.

Dostoevsky structures his story in such a way as to both rehearse and thwart the process of Prokharchin's typification. While it is clear from the beginning that Prokharchin is a typical petty clerk, over the course of the story the other characters and the reader come to realize that he is also a miser. This means that all along he has nursed secrets—namely, money and a lively, even overactive “imagination” (*voobrazheni[e]*)—that had previously eluded the intellectual or material reach of the petty clerk type.<sup>443</sup> Thus, the revelation of Prokharchin's miserliness adds another typological layer to this character even as it destabilizes our evaluation of him as a typical petty clerk. The evaluation and reevaluation of the hero that happens within the *fabula* has its counterpart in the dialogic style of narration, as Dostoevsky presents multiple, changing perspectives on Prokharchin.<sup>444</sup> Introducing himself near the beginning as Prokharchin's “biographer” (*biograf*), the narrator assembles a report of Prokharchin's life based on what the other lodgers in his apartment say about him after he has died: “Such were the rumors in circulation after Prokharchin's death” (*Takie tolki poshli uzhe po konchine Semena Ivanovicha*).<sup>445</sup> In this way, the narrator resembles a newspaper reporter who has heard of a miserly clerk whose savings were discovered after his death, and who has visited the dead man's apartment to obtain the full story. Indeed, it has been pointed out that “Mr. Prokharchin” incorporates recognizable plot elements from a short newspaper report called “Unusual Miserliness” (“Neobyknovennaia skupost”).<sup>446</sup> What has not been noted is that the narrative

<sup>440</sup> Aleksandr Tseitlin, *Povesti o bednom chinovnike*, 24.

<sup>441</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 245; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 11.

<sup>442</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 245; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 11, translation modified.

<sup>443</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 241; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 5.

<sup>444</sup> On Dostoevsky's dialogism, see Mikhail Bakhtin's classic study, Bakhtin, “Problemy poetika Dostoevskogo.” *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

<sup>445</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 242; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 6.

<sup>446</sup> V. S. Nechaeva, *Rannii Dostoevskii: 1821-1849* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), 164-65.

style of reportage in “Mr. Prokharchin” may also result from the newspaper’s formal influence on Dostoevsky’s poetics.<sup>447</sup>

The narrator explicitly relies on the other characters’ testimony in order to typify Prokharchin as a miser. He writes, “The first thing they noticed was the unmistakable miserliness and niggardliness of Semyon Ivanovich. That was at once observed and noted.” (*Pervoe, na chto obratili vnimanie, bylo, bez somneniia, skopidomstvo i skarednost’ Semena Ivanovicha. Eto totchas zametili i priniali v schet.*)<sup>448</sup> The narrator then explains the basis on which the other characters made this calculation, describing at length the pains Prokharchin takes to avoid spending money on food, drink, or clothing. Here, the miser’s stinginess drives an early Realist accumulation of petty details. The narrator insists these details are valuable because they express the hero’s typicality as a miser, reflecting “one dominant trait in the hero of the story” (*odna gospodstviushchaia cherta v kharaktere geroia sei povesti*).<sup>449</sup> Having run through a catalog of Prokharchin’s efforts to scrimp and save, the narrator now confirms the other lodgers’ earlier assessment of Prokharchin’s behavior, saying that it stems “from miserliness and excessive carefulness: all this, however will be much clearer later on (*iz skopidomstva i izlishnei ostorozhnosti chto, vprochem, gorazdo iasnee budet vposledstvii*).<sup>450</sup> Here the narrator has put concrete particulars in service to a preconceived notion, or type, and he promises more details that will further clarify and confirm the hero’s typicality.

In so doing, he reverses the process Belinsky advocates of exposing and abstracting the typical aspects of contemporary society from concrete particulars. Instead, he follows the pattern of miser fables and comedies, which are so often named “The Miser,” thereby announcing from the start that the main character will exemplify a preexisting type. Nevertheless, the narrator saves the revelation of the miser’s hoard until the end of the story, despite the fact that he knows from the beginning that such a hoard exists. Prokharchin’s hoarding is the other side of the miser-type coin: on one side, the miser is loath to let money go, and on the other, he works to store money up. The exposure of the miser’s corpse and coins thus promises to be both the delivery of the final narrative value, or meaning, of the story, and the culmination of the process of typification.

Undermining the credibility of the narrator’s assessment of Prokharchin, however, Dostoevsky does not portray his narrator as someone who reports true facts. Instead, he calls attention to the shaky foundations—the “rumours” cited above—on which the narrator bases his assessments. Moreover, while at times the narrator clearly identifies the sources of his knowledge about Prokharchin, he also makes persistent use of free indirect discourse, presenting the other characters’ biased, at times entirely false views of Prokharchin as his own. For instance, as cited above, in the beginning of the story the narrator claims that “due to Prokharchin’s

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<sup>447</sup> As Leonid Grossman points out, Dostoevskii was an avid reader of the newspapers, and he habitually drew the typical from their store of particulars: “he was able to recreate an integral profile of the current historical moment out of the fragmentary trivia of a past day” (*umel vosstanovliat’ tsel’nyi oblik tekushchei istoricheskoi minuty iz otrivochnykh melochei minuvshogo dnia*). In an 1867 letter, Dostoevskii says one must read the newspaper “so that the visible connection between all things public and private might be stronger and more obvious (*dlia togo, chto vidimaia sviaz’ vsekh del obshchikh i chastnykh stanovitsia vse sil’nee i iavstvennee*). Leonid Grossman, *Poetika Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: GAKhN, 1925), 176. Cited in Bakhtin, *Problemy Poetiki Dostoevskogo*, 38; *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 45. On Dostoevsky and the newspaper, see also Konstantine Klioutchkine, “The Rise of Crime and Punishment from the Air of the Media,” *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (April 1, 2002): 88-108.

<sup>448</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 241; “Mr. Prohartchin,” 5, translation modified.

<sup>449</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 242; “Mr. Prohartchin,” 6.

<sup>450</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 242; “Mr. Prohartchin,” 6, translation modified.

humble grade in the service. . . Ustinya Fyodorovna could not get more than five roubles a month from him for his lodging.”<sup>451</sup> This understanding of why Prokharchin does not pay a higher rent must belong to the landlady herself, because, as we have seen, the narrator knows from the beginning that Prokharchin has a great deal of money.

Relying on Ustinya Fyodorovna’s misinterpretation of Prokharchin, the narrator misrepresents the miser to the readers. By the end of the story, Ustinya Fyodorovna has learned that Prokharchin could have paid a great deal more than she thought, and her complaint—“[A]h the deceiver! He deceived me, he cheated me, a poor orphan!” (*Akh... obmanshchik takoi! Obmanul, nadul sirotu!*)—is one the reader might level at the deceptive narrator as well.<sup>452</sup> Interestingly, Dostoevsky’s free indirect discourse both recalls and radically departs from the narrative structure of miser fables. Whereas in fables, the narrator often relies on a non-miserly character as a sort of mouthpiece within the *fabula*, through which he can issue a judgment about miserliness that presumably corresponds to the author’s view, in “Mr. Prokharchin,” there are so many voices speaking about Prokharchin that it becomes impossible to judge which, if any, belongs to the narrator or the author. In “Mr. Prokharchin,” we see Dostoevsky training his hallmark style of dialogic narration on a character type with an ancient legacy of monologic interpretation.<sup>453</sup>

Working together as though in a polyphonic concert of type-casting, the narrator and the other characters are not content to establish Prokharchin as a petty clerk and a miser, but continuously endow him with additional typological layers. Each new attribute ascribed to him has a dehumanizing effect, pushing him a step closer to death and ghostliness. At one point, when Prokharchin is causing a disturbance in the apartment, and the other lodgers forcibly carry him back into the tiny “corner” where he lives behind a screen, the narrator compares him to a “Punch puppet” (*Pul’chinel’*) that a street puppeteer has put into a box after a show.<sup>454</sup> In another instance, Prokharchin’s secretive, misanthropic behavior and his anxiety about the possible collapse of the department where he works raise the other lodgers’ suspicion that these details of his character reflect a more ambitious typicality: one of the lodgers accuses Prokharchin of being a “Napoleon.”<sup>455</sup> Here, typification appears as a form of violence, as this accusation frightens Prokharchin so much that he suffers an emotional and physical breakdown, crying out in terror and falling into fever and delirium that lasts until the moment of his death. Having been typified as a Napoleonic individualist who challenges political authority, Prokharchin suffers a metaphorical execution:

Вытащили Семена Ивановича, протянули его на тюфяк, но сразу заметили, что много хлопотать было нечего, что капут совершенный; руки его костенеют, а сам еле держится. Стали над ним: он все еще помаленьку дрожал и трепетал всем телом, что-то силился сделать руками, языком не шевелил, но моргал глазами совершенно подобным образом, как, говорят, моргает вся еще теплая, залитая кровью и живущая голова, только что отскочившая от палачова топора.

<sup>451</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 240; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 3.

<sup>452</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 262; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 37, translation modified.

<sup>453</sup> Cf. Victor Terras, *The Young Dostoevsky (1846-1849): A Critical Study* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 225.

<sup>454</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 251-2; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 21.

<sup>455</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 257; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 29.

They pulled Semyon Ivanovitch out, stretched him on the mattress, but soon realized that there was no need to make trouble over him, that he was completely done for; his arms were stiff, and he seemed all to pieces. They stood over him, he still faintly shuddered and trembled all over, made an effort to do something with his arms, could not utter a word, but blinked his eyes as they say heads do when still warm and bleeding, having just been severed by the executioner's axe.<sup>456</sup>

What is most striking about this quote is the chiasmic way in which Dostoevsky prolongs the moment of Prokharchin's death, presenting him as already dead while still alive, and still alive while already dead. As a petty clerk, a miser, a Punch puppet, and a Napoleon, Prokharchin is a monstrous composite of older and newer clichés.

Strangely enough, even after Prokharchin would seem to have definitively died, he continues to be reanimated and killed off again. Just after the other characters watch him die, a packet of ten silver rubles drops out of the mattress on which he is lying, almost as a sign of the physical decomposition his body will soon undergo. This first step in the discovery of Prokharchin's hoard triggers Dostoevsky's sudden adoption of theatrical terminology, as he stages the final scene of his story in the manner of a miser comedy: "[T]he guttering candle lighted up a scene that would have been extremely curious to a spectator. About a dozen lodgers were grouped round the bed in the most picturesque costumes" (*Nagorevshii sal'nyi ogarok osveshchal chrezvychaino liubopytnuiu dlia nabliudatelia tsenu. Okolo desiatka zhil'tsov ruppirovalos' u krovati v samykh zhivopisnykh kostiumakh*).<sup>457</sup> In this spectacular scene of exposure, the other characters, who have invaded Prokharchin's private space, breaking down the screen that cordoned it off from the rest of the apartment, and rummaging through his belongings, begin to poke around at his mattress, digging out and amassing a "steadily growing heap of silver and other coins" (*postepenno vozrastavshaia kucha serebra i vsiakhikh monet*).<sup>458</sup>

In order to fully reveal the dead man's secret treasure—the money that has the narrative value of establishing his typicality as a miser—they pull the mattress out from underneath him, jostling his corpse as they do so:

Семен Иванович, зная учтивость, сначала уступил немножко места, скатившись на бочок, спиною к искателям; потом, при втором толчке, поместился ничком, наконец еще уступил, и так как недоставало последней боковой доски в кровати, то вдруг совсем неожиданно бултыхнулся вниз головою, оставив на вид только две костлявые, худые, синие ноги, торчавшие кверху, как два сучка обгоревшего дерева. Так как господин Прохарчин уже второй раз в это утро навевывался под свою кровать, то немедленно возбудил подозрение, и кое-кто из жильцов. . . полезли туда же с намерением посмотреть, не скрыто ли и там кой-чего. Но искатели только напрасно перестукались лбами, и так как Ярослав Ильич тут же прикрикнул на них и велел немедленно освободить Семена Ивановича из скверного места, то двое из благоразумнейших взяли каждый в обе руки по ноге, вытащили неожиданного капиталиста на свет божий и положили его поперек кровати.

<sup>456</sup> Dostoevskii, "Gospodin Prokharchin," 258; "Mr. Prohartchin," 32.

<sup>457</sup> Dostoevskii, "Gospodin Prokharchin," 260; "Mr. Prohartchin," 34.

<sup>458</sup> Dostoevskii, "Gospodin Prokharchin," 260; "Mr. Prohartchin," 34.

... Semyon Ivanovitch with his habitual civility made room a little, rolling on his side with his back to the searchers; then at a second shake he turned on his face, finally gave way still further, and as the last slat in the bedstead was missing, he suddenly and quite unexpectedly plunged head downward, leaving in view only two bony, thin, blue legs, which stuck upwards like two branches of a charred tree. As this was the second time that morning that Mr. Prohartchin had poked his head under his bed it at once aroused suspicion, and some of the lodgers . . . crept under it, with the intention of seeing whether there were something hidden there too. But they knocked their heads together for nothing, and as Yaroslav Ilyitch shouted to them, bidding them release Semyon Ivanovitch at once from his unpleasant position, two of the more sensible seized each a leg, dragged the unsuspected capitalist into the light of day and laid him across the bed.<sup>459</sup>

Here, typification entails an intrusive, physical, and comical mockery of the miser, as his corpse is farcically dragged and pushed about. Yet even as he is handled roughly, he somehow escapes the grasp of the onlookers. Death by typification has stiffened his body, objectified him, turning his legs into branches of a “charred tree,” but it also reanimates him as particularly polite and cooperative. He is at once skeletal—with his “spine to the seekers,” and his “bony, emaciated, blue legs, sticking out”—and lively enough to arouse suspicion with his actions. Moreover, the narrator and the lodgers still fail to understand who Prokharchin really is: calling him an “unsuspected capitalist,” the narrator mistakes his miserly hoarding for capitalist saving.

This exposure of the paradoxically mortifying yet reinvigorating effects of typification parallels the exposure of Prokharchin’s hoard. Notably, the full exposure of the hoard appears in Dostoevsky’s story as official business: several government clerks descend on the apartment to assess Prokharchin’s belongings. As the officials take stock of the dead man’s money, Dostoevsky focuses so closely on the material look and feel of Prokharchin’s coins that their value—or in other words their typicality as representatives of exchange value—becomes impossible to assess:

[С]еребряная куча росла -- и боже! чего, чего не было тут... Благородные целковики, солидные, крепкие полторарублевики, хорошенькая монета полтинник, плебеи четвертачки, двугривеннички, даже малообещающая, старушечья мелюзга, гривенники и пятаки серебром, -- всё в особых бумажках, в самом методическом и солидном порядке. Были и редкости: два какие-то жетона, один наполеондор, одна неизвестно какая, но только очень редкая монетка... Некоторые из рублевиков относились тоже к глубокой древности; истертые и изрубленные елизаветинские, немецкие крестовики, петровские монеты, екатерининские; были, например, теперь весьма редкие монетки, старые пятиалтыннички, проколотые для ношения в ушах, все совершенно истертые, но с законным количеством точек; даже медь была, но вся уже зеленая, ржавая... Нашли одну красную бумажку -- но более не было.

[T]he heap of silver grew—and, my goodness, what a lot there was! . . . Noble silver roubles, stout solid rouble and a half pieces, pretty half rouble coins, plebeian quarter roubles, twenty kopeck pieces, even the unpromising old crone’s small fry of ten and five kopeck silver pieces—all done up in separate bits of paper in the most methodical and

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<sup>459</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 260-61; “Mr. Prohartchin,” 35.

systematic way; there were curiosities also, two counters of some sort, one napoléon d'or, one very rare coin of some unknown kind... Some of the roubles were of the greatest antiquity, they were rubbed and hacked coins of Elizabeth, German kreutzers, coins of Peter, of Catherine; there were, for instance, old fifteen-kopeck pieces, now very rare, pierced for wearing as earrings, all much worn, yet with the requisite number of dots... there was even copper, but all of that was green and tarnished.... They found one red note, but no more.<sup>460</sup>

This treasure of descriptive details consists of no fewer than sixteen forms of currency, of disparate—and in some cases entirely uncertain—value. There are coins that are or were legal tender in Russia or abroad, tokens and coins that are either not clearly pieces of money or have been defaced, potentially changing their value, but in an unclear way, and one unidentifiable coin—“of some unknown kind” (*neizvestno kakaia*). Many of these coins—the rare ones or the pair made into earrings—would have aesthetic value or value for coin collectors, but it is not at all clear that they could be used to make purchases in 1840s Petersburg.

Moreover, from the beginning to the end of the passage, the logic governing the store of money changes: at first, the contemporary Russian coins that appear likely to be legal tender are described as neatly and systematically packaged, suggesting that Prokharchin has been counting them up carefully because he values them above all for their exchange value. Here he recalls the baron who carefully counts and packages his gold in Pushkin's “The Covetous Knight.” Next, however, the narrator describes the “rarities” that could have aesthetic or historical value for collectors, but which are no longer usable as money. Here, Prokharchin's hoard recalls the coin collection the miser Old Grandet gives his daughter in Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*.<sup>461</sup> Finally, this logic of collection disintegrates, as the last coins are of green and rusted copper that would have surely been polished by a true numismatist. At this point, Prokharchin's collection begins to look like Plyushkin's pile of junk in Gogol's *Dead Souls*.

Yet despite this minutely described diversity of currencies and types of value, the government officials instantly—as if magically—count them up and proclaim their collective worth as “exactly 2497 roubles and a half” (*rovno dve tysiachi cheyresta devianosto sem' rublei s poltinou*).<sup>462</sup> Here the uniqueness of the coins and their values is effaced and converted to one abstract monetary standard. Furthermore, noting that the sum comes out to nearly “2500 *assignatsii*,” the officials show they are evaluating the hoard in terms of the paper *assignatsiia*.<sup>463</sup> This is puzzling not only because there is only one bill in Prokharchin's hoard, but also because, as discussed in the previous chapter, following the Imperial financial reforms of 1839-1843, the silver ruble had replaced the *assignatsiia* as the main unit of currency; the *kreditnyi bilet*, or credit bill, had replaced the *assignatsiia* as paper money, and at the time Dostoevsky wrote “Mr. Prokharchin,” the *assignatsii* were being recalled and destroyed. Thus, the government officials' bizarre reliance on the outdated *assignatsiia* in their assessment of Prokharchin's hoard undermines the Realism—in the sense of the representation of contemporary social reality—of their calculation.<sup>464</sup> At this point in Russian monetary history, the *assignatsiia* is a ghostly type

<sup>460</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 261; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 35.

<sup>461</sup> Grossman identifies the description of Eugénie's coin collection as an important source for Prokharchin's hoard, but he does not suggest, as I do, that this logic of collection is but one of many that govern Prokharchin's saving. Grossman, “Bal'zak i Dostoevskii,” 85.

<sup>462</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 261; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 36.

<sup>463</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 261; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 36.

<sup>464</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 261; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 36.

of currency; its death has already been announced, but it continues to haunt this scene of evaluation and typification.

Like the magically efficient calculation of the Prokharchin's worth that the government officials perform, the revelation of the hero's typical miserliness renders his value (or meaning) as an individual more, and not less, mysterious. The lodgers, the narrator, and the reader struggle even more to understand this man after his death. He takes on a "significant air, of which Semyon Ivanovitch during his lifetime had not been suspected of being capable" (*znachitel'nyim vidom, kotorogo nikak nel'zia bylo by podozrevat' pri zhizni prinadlezhnost'iu Semena Ivanovicha*).<sup>465</sup> Problematizing everyone's attempts to interpret Prokharchin, Dostoevsky scatters the signs of the miser's traditional readability—his keys. Prokharchin's death and the discovery of his hoard come after a very chaotic passage in the narrative during which two other characters (Zimoveykin and Remnev) are rumored (by another character, Okeanov) to have entered Prokharchin's bedroom at night. When the whole cast of lodgers assembles and at last finds his money, it is not where one would expect—in the locked trunk he guarded so anxiously throughout the story—but rather in the mattress, where it seems to have been only recently stuffed.<sup>466</sup> The key to Prokharchin's trunk, which was "lost that night," turns up inexplicably the next day in Zimoveykin's pocket, suggesting that this character had been hoping to rob Prokharchin.<sup>467</sup> Ultimately, however, it remains unclear whether Zimoveykin had unlocked Prokharchin's trunk and transferred the money to the mattress, or whether Prokharchin himself had been hiding it there all along. This mysterious reconfiguration of the traditional signs of miserliness frustrates the reader's attempts to understand exactly how and why Prokharchin has been saving, and it intimates that the typification of Prokharchin is an attempted narrative "robbery" that does not quite come off.

Whereas in the end of miser fables the narrator and the other characters model the reader's moral evaluation and condemnation of miserliness, this story ends with all parties (the narrator, the other characters, and the readers) uncertain what to think about Prokharchin. Dostoevsky hints at his reliance on, and disruption of, the tradition of the miser fable when the narrator compares Prokharchin to two different kinds of birds, each of which suggests a different interpretation of the miser:

Весь этот внезапно остывший угол можно было бы весьма удобно сравнить поэту с разоренным гнездом "домовитой" ласточки: всё разбито и истерзано бурей, убиты птенчики с матерью, и развеяна кругом их теплая постелька из пуха, перышек, хлопок... Впрочем, Семен Иванович смотрел скорее как старый самолюбец и вор-воробей.

The whole room, suddenly so still, might well have been compared by a poet to the ruined nest of a swallow, broken down and torn to pieces by the storm, the nestlings and their mother killed, and their warm little bed of fluff, feather and flock scattered about them... Semyon Ivanovitch, however, looked more like a conceited, thievish old cock-sparrow.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> Dostoevskii, "Gospodin Prokharchin," 262; "Mr. Prohartchin," 38.

<sup>466</sup> Dostoevskii, "Gospodin Prokharchin," 260; "Mr. Prohartchin," 34.

<sup>467</sup> Dostoevskii, "Gospodin Prokharchin," 259; "Mr. Prohartchin," 33.

<sup>468</sup> Dostoevskii, "Gospodin Prokharchin," 262; "Mr. Prohartchin," 37-38.

Although the narrator seems to believe that Prokharchin could be more fittingly compared to a “thievish old cock-sparrow” than an exposed and violated swallow, his inclusion of both metaphors leaves the reader unsure how to evaluate the miser.

In lieu of any sort of judgment the narrator or other characters might offer about Prokharchin, the last lines of the story are the words of the once more reanimated miser, who questions the characters and the reader alike, asking whether he might not be dead after all: “[H]ere I am dead now, but look, here, what if—that is, perhaps it can’t be so—but I say what if I’m not dead, what if I get up, do you hear? What would happen then?” ([*O*]no vot umer teper’; a nu kak etak, togo, to est’ ono, pozhalui, i ne mozhet tak byt’, a nu kak etak, togo, i ne umer—slysh’ ty, vstanu, tak chto-to budet, a?).<sup>469</sup> By creating a miser who refuses to die and be judged as typological tradition dictates, Dostoevsky raises the question of just what typification is and does to the human individual and the literary character: in “Mr. Prokharchin,” the miser is simultaneously a physical, material being and an abstract value, a stubbornly vital human and a ghostly cliché. Thus, Dostoevsky uses multiple character types and currencies to render Prokharchin multiply significant: the miser’s coins appear as emblems of his complex psychology, which is only partly exposed and confiscated by a narrative that seeks to convert it to a general equivalent. Prokharchin’s coins and corpse remain illegible, as no type can quite capture their value.

Dostoevsky’s transformation of the character type of the miser demonstrates what would prove to be his lifelong fascination with money as a link between material objects and abstract ideals, and also between private and public life. The investigation of Realist typology that the miser helps him to launch also lays important groundwork for the methods of characterization and narrative perspective that structure his later novels. Like the writings of the Natural School, the tradition of miser narratives features a poetics of exposure, yet in “Mr. Prokharchin” Dostoevsky thwarts the exposure of the hero his miserly clerk tale leads readers to expect. By approaching his hyper-typical hero from a variety of generically coded narrative perspectives that ultimately fail to uncover the character’s secret motives for stockpiling currency, Dostoevsky develops authorial strategies for representing what his later works continue to posit as the hidden treasures of individual human psychology—in Bakhtin’s words, that “internally unfinalizable something in man” (*nechto vnutrenne nezavershimoe v cheloveke*)—that no narrator can reveal.<sup>470</sup>

## Conclusion

In order to understand Dostoevsky’s use of money and the miser as related to early Realist typology, it has been necessary to consider how the miser came into Russian literature, and how Pushkin and Gogol transformed this ancient type in “The Covetous Knight” and *Dead Souls*. Noting the frequent appearance of the miser in Russian fables of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, I have shown that the prolific success of this type in European letters is due not only to the persistence of parsimony and the money economy, but also because the miser betrays an author’s passionate accumulation of signs of a given type. If in eighteenth-century Russia, fabulists like Sumarokov patterned their accumulation of types after the Neo-classical French example of La Fontaine, who had himself advocated increasing the world’s store of types fashioned according to Greek and Roman models, by the second quarter of the nineteenth

<sup>469</sup> Dostoevskii, “Gospodin Prokharchin,” 263; “Mr. Prokharchin,” 38.

<sup>470</sup> Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 59; Bakhtin, “Problemy poetika Dostoevskogo.” 69.

century Russian writers like Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevsky critically engaged with French, Russian, Neo-classical and contemporary types instead of merely imitating them. What has become clear through a comparison of Pushkin's, Gogol's, and Dostoevsky's misers is that the miser provided each of these authors with a narrative opportunity to develop fresh methods of characterization through dialogue with their literary forebears. In "The Covetous Knight," Pushkin enlivens the dead type of the miser by historicizing it as well as by granting it a poetic imagination. In *Dead Souls*, Gogol distorts the miser into a gross caricature who appears at once newly fresh and nearly unrecognizable.<sup>471</sup> In "Mr. Prokharchin," Dostoevsky combines the miser with multiple other types to portray the stubborn resistance of living material to fantastic, ghostly abstraction. In each of these works, the miser appears as a strangely illegible character who flaunts the conventional legibility of the miser type.

In their miser texts, Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevsky demonstrate a preoccupation with the problem of how to create characters that appear living despite the absence in them of natural, physical life. In fact, after examining their representations of this type in some detail, one is led to believe that for Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevsky, the miser's (im)mortality—as a type who dies (either physically or spiritually), and as a dead type always ready to live and die again—was as fascinating as his money. These authors' marked interest in the miser's living deathliness leads to a final, perhaps less obvious conclusion: namely, that the genre of the fable deserves

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<sup>471</sup> Gogol himself referred to his characters as "caricatures." Gippius, *Gogol'*, 154; *Gogol*, 128.

further exploration as contributing to the development of early Russian Realist characterization. Both the fable's ancient system of character typology and the uniquely Russian trickery Pushkin identifies in Krylov's fables continue to animate Pushkin's, Gogol's, and Dostoevsky's incarnations of the miser. While the texts explored in this chapter detail the death of the miser as a timeless type who comes with a ready-made interpretation, they also show how Russian writers in the 1830s-1840s developed new methods of characterization through heated negotiations with the older type of type that he embodies.

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## APPENDIX

Definitions of Ambition, *Ambition*, *Ambitsiia*, *Liubochestie* and *Chestoliubie*

**I. Ambition (English)**

A. *OED* (online ed., 2009):

The ardent (in early usage, inordinate) desire to rise to high position, or to attain rank, influence, distinction or other preferment.

**II. *Ambition***

A. *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (*Dictionary of the French Academy*, 1694):  
*Desir excessif d'honneur & de grandeur* (Excessive desire for honor and grandeur).

B. *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française*, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> eds. (1798, 1832):

*Désir immodéré d'honneur, de gloire, d'élévation, de distinction* (Immoderate desire for honor, glory, elevation or distinction).

C. *Littre: Dictionnaire de la langue française* (1872-77):

*Désir ardent de gloire, d'honneurs, de fortune* (Ardent desire of glory, honors, fortune).

D. *Dictionnaire*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (1932):

*Désir ou recherche d'honneurs, de gloire, d'élévation, de distinction* (Desire or seeking of honors, glory, elevation, distinction).

E. *Dictionnaire*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (1986-):

*Vif désir de s'élever pour réaliser toutes les possibilités de sa nature; recherche passionnée de la gloire, du pouvoir, de la réussite sociale* (Lively desire to elevate oneself so as to realize all the possibilities of one's nature; passionate pursuit of glory, power, social success).

**III. Амбиция (Russian, *Ambitsiia*)**

A. *Novyi slovotolkovatel'* (1803-06):

Славолюбие, высокомерие, любочестие, чрезвычайное и непомерное желание к богатству, к достоинствам, к чести (Love of glory, haughtiness, love of honor, extreme and inordinate desire for wealth, titles, honor).

B. *Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi* (1806-22): Not listed

C. *Dal'* (1863-66):

Чувство чести, благородства; самолюбие, спесь, чванство; требование внешних знаков уважения, почта (A feeling of honor, nobility; pride, arrogance, conceit; need for external signs of respect, esteem).

D. *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XVIII-ogo veka* (1984-):

1. Домогательство власти, властолюбие. 2. Честолюбие, славолюбие. 3. Чувство собственного достоинства. Высокомерие, заносчивость. (1. Solicitation of power, lust for power 2. *Chestoliubie*, love of glory. Feeling of personal worth. Haughtiness, arrogance.)

E. *Bol'shoi akademicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka* (2004-):

1. Гордость, обостренное чувство собственного достоинства. 2. Чрезмерное самомнение, самолюбие; спесь, чванство. Притязания на что л., вызванные уверенностью в себе, в своих силах, возможностях; честолюбивые замыслы. (1. Pride, heightened sense of self-worth. 2. Inordinately high opinion of oneself; arrogance, conceit. Pretensions to something, stimulated by confidence in oneself, one's powers, possibilities; ambitious ideas.)

**IV. Любочестие**

A. *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XVIII-ogo veka* (1984-):

Честолюбие, желание славы, почестей (*Chestoliubie*, desire for glory, honors).

**V. Честолюбие** (*Chestoliubie*)

A. *Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi* (1806-22):

Слабость духа, по которой человек ищет в наружных знаках и способах получить уважение и почтение от других, коих сам в себе не имеет (A weakness of spirit leading a person to seek in external means and signs the respect and consideration from others that he does not have for himself).

B. *Dal'* (1863-66):

[И]скательство внешней чести, уваженья, почета, почестей ([P]ursuit of outward respect, esteem, honors).

C. *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XVIII-ogo veka* (1984-): Volume forthcoming

D. *Bol'shoi akademicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka* (2004-): Volume forthcoming