Unseemly Selves: Russian Realism and Early Psychiatry

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Unseemly Selves: Russian Realism and Early Psychiatry

A dissertation presented

by

Giulia Dossi

to

The Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

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Unseemly Selves: Russian Realism and Early Psychiatry

Abstract

In this dissertation, I focus on early (or proto-) psychiatry and Realist literature between the 1840s and the 1880s. Rather than tracing their mutual influence, I consider them both as reactions to the cultural debate between metaphysics and materialism, which raged throughout the nineteenth century in Russia. Building on affect theory and theories of the grotesque as a literary mode and an affective category, I examine how characters in both disciplines were depicted as having inaccessible interiorities. I begin by presenting and examining an archive of early psychiatric case histories, in which patients are depicted as having illegible emotional lives. Early psychiatric theory considered the affective divide between the mentally ill and the rest of society to be unbridgeable. Psychiatrists then presented themselves as specialist interpreters and thus had to contend with the limits of their own capacity to read and write about their patients' affective lives. In my literary analysis, I focus on four canonical Realist novels: Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov*, Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin's *The Golovlevs,* and Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov.* These novelists also underlined the limits of character legibility and created affectively grotesque characters. By reading these Realist novels through the lens of grotesque affectivity, I uncover in these novels a tendency towards opacity rather than legibility. This trend defies the expectations of clarity in psychological prose that are widely shared by readers and critics. I propose instead that pervasive illegibility of character is a previously unidentified trait of Russian Realism, and I use the work of these four authors as its most vivid example.

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Note on Primary Sources, Transliteration, and Translations

In chapters two to five, references to the authors' texts come from their collected volumes. Respectively: Goncharov, I. A. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v dvadtsati tomakh,* 20 vols. (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1997–); Turgenev, I.S. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v dvadtsati vos'mi tomakh*. 28 vols. Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk SSSR, 1960; Saltykov, M.E. *Sobranie sochinenii: v dvadtsati tomakh*. 20 vols. Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1965; Dostoevskii, F.M. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh.* 30 vols. Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk SSSR, 1972-1988. In each chapter, I refer to the collected work of the author as PSS and volume number.

All translations from the Russian are mine, except for translations of Dostoevskii's *Bratia Karamazovy,* which are all taken from: Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov: a Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue*. Translated by Richard Pevear, and Larissa Volokhonsky. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.

I use the Library of Congress transliteration system for Russian in the bibliography and in the main text, except for translated references to *The Brothers Karamazov,* which follow Pevear and Volokhonsky's spelling.

Introduction

I agree that two times two makes four is an excellent thing;
but if we are dispensing praise, then two times two makes five
is sometimes a most charming little thing as well.
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*

"Only connect," E.M. Foster proposed.
"Only we can't," the psychoanalyst knows.
Janet Malcom, *Psychoanalysis: The Impossible Profession*

Between the 1840s and the 1880s in Russia the same, urgent question brought together writers, psychiatrists and critics: how should one think and, most importantly, write about interiority?[1] For a moment, it seemed as if physiology and positivism could easily resolve this question, and the belief, among progressives and radicals in particular, in the power of science to gain a full understanding not only of the individual but also of society was widespread.[2] This enlightenment-like optimism and belief in anthropological materialism, brought about by the rise of physiology, was partially abandoned or at least supplemented with a more socio-historical approach by the 1870s (Todes 180). From the beginning, however, the ascent of materialism and positivism left one problem unresolved, best illustrated by Dostoevsky's Underground Man: what good is a logical, physiological understanding of the individual when we are dealing with someone who acts in unexpected, irrational ways? How do we understand, or *read*, someone who thinks, but most importantly feels, following different, inexplicable rules?

During this period, physiology and "physiological psychology" took the Russian cultural world by storm.[3] New scientific developments pervaded Russian public discourse: before the appearance of specialized medical and scientific journals, starting in the middle of the 1840s, many of the prominent "thick journals," such as *The Contemporary* (*Sovremennik*)*, The Library for Reading* (*Biblioteka dlia chteniia*)*, Son of the Fatherland* (*Syn otechestva*)*, The Northern Bee* (*Severnaia pchela*)*, Notes of the Fatherland* (*Otechestvennye zapiski*)*,* were regularly presenting, reviewing, and summarizing scientific and medical discoveries for the general public (Merten 33). Both the first, Herzen, Belinsky, and the second, Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov, Pisarev, generation of radical critics were in awe of physiology, psychopathology, and eventually Darwinism. They praised not only the material itself, but also the style in which it was presented. Above all, they admired the clarity and directness of scientific writing and encouraged novelists to follow this example.[4] At first, these critics urged Russian prose writers to act like physiologists and mirror observable, external phenomena in their writing. Soon, however, a psychological turn occurred: critics believed that writers should see and represent life within certain societal environments not through external occurrences, but through the *inner* mental state of the individual, and through a personal understanding of reality (Merten 65).[5] Realist writers, so advised the critics, should strive to go deeper, and account for the motivations of an action, not just for its external unfolding.[6] In other words, they should not write like physiologists, but like specialists belonging to a burgeoning new discipline: psychiatry.[7]

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[1] Discussions on the discovery of interiority during this time can be found in Merten, Ginzburg.

[2] See Vucinich, Merten, Todes.

[3] For a detailed account of the physiological turn in Russian medicine see Vucinich, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2. A historical discussion of the developments in psychiatry and psychology can be found in Iudin, 39-358. For an analysis of psychiatry as a profession see Brown. For a focus on psychology

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see Joravsky, Chapter 1-5; and Grigorenko, Part I. For the link between medicine and Realism see Merten *Die Ensteehung des Realismus.*

[4] See for example, Belinsky, "Vzgliad na russkuiu literaturu 1846 g."; Chernyshevskii, 328; Maikov, 26; and Pisarev, "Progress v mire zhivotnykh i rastenii."

[5] For the effect of scientism on prose writing and criticism between 1840 and 1880, see Merten. For a full discussion of the evolution of radical thought and scientism, see Todes. For a detailed account of the physiological turn in Russian medicine and culture, see Vucinich.

[6] Belinsky's essay, "Vzgliad na russkuiu literaturu 1847 g." well illustrates this change in approach.

[7] Before the 1880s, the field of psychiatry had not been officially established in Russia yet. The role of the psychiatrist itself varied greatly, with some doctors having only theoretical training,

While the radical critics enthusiastically embraced physiology, and what was called "physiological psychology" (another term to refer to the emerging discipline of psychiatry) as the key to gaining unlimited access into people's inner lives, psychiatrists were discovering that the latest advances in neurology and physiology were not very helpful in diagnosing and treating their patients. A big problem seemed to be the fact that their patients (whom they called the insane, "помешанный") were not acting according to reason, but according to emotion. What is more, even their emotions did not resemble the ones that other, more rational (what psychiatrists at the time considered normal or sane) people experienced. Practitioners were confronted with patients who were often either feeling indifferent to the world around them or who had emotional responses that were perceived as inadequate (for example, no feelings of regret after committing a crime). In the psychiatric writing of the time, the divide between insane and sane emotional lives became a central diagnostic characteristic. When it came to making sense of the insane affective selves, however, psychiatrists were not faring so well. The insane seem to resist the practitioners' attempts at reading them.

The fact that the insane were not only rationally, but emotionally different, and illegible, had two main consequences. On one hand, it made them seem dangerous, because they could act unexpectedly, not obeying to the rules of the civilized, rational world. On the other, it required the intervention of an expert reader, the psychiatrist, to translate their confusing, opaque emotional manifestations into psychopathological symptoms that could theoretically be treated. Psychiatrists

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while others had no formal training but only experience with patients. These doctors did read European literature on the subject and published their own work, however, both in terms of case studies and theories. I do not mean to imply that there was an established, organized, and formally recognized discipline of psychiatry in Russia before 1880, but I do find it convenient to group these miscellaneous collections of theories and practitioners, with the needed provisos, under the label of "early psychiatry."

thus found themselves trying to follow a threefold imperative: protect, interpret, and legitimize. Protect the rest of society from dangerous elements;[8] interpret a seemingly unexplainable behavior and translate it into a medical diagnosis; but also legitimize their own unique and privileged position as experts who could handle these difficult tasks.[9] As they tried to accomplish all three at once, early psychiatrists strove to emphasize their specialized ability to read the affectively illegible patients, while at the same time making the patients' unseemly selves accessible and understandable to the public they were writing for. As a result of this paradox, early psychiatric case studies present patients that often resist legibility, and many emotional ambiguities in them are left unresolved.

At the same time, the other group that was encouraged to systematically explore all nooks and recesses of people's inner selves, Realist writers, also found the premise of the task to be faulty. One of the paradoxes of Russian Realism lies in the clash between the expectation of psychological depth and masterful exposition, of being able to "read" every character on one hand, and the ultimate inscrutability of the inner self on the other.[10] While it is undeniable that the inner lives of literary characters were given new importance during this period of "psychological" realism, I propose that many Realist novelists embarked on a search for bounds rather than expansiveness. In his book *The One vs the Many,* Alex Woloch points out how the inability to exhaustively represent human interiority, in addition to a mimetic problem, can be foregrounded as an aesthetic one (23). I argue that a trend can be discovered in Realist novels of the second half of the nineteenth century to make illegibility of character an aesthetic, in addition to a mimetic, question. Novelists showed that "sane" people can be just as illegible as the insane, and that mutual understanding between people is overall fraught.

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[8] In nineteenth century and early twentieth century Russia, it seems that this was not the psychiatrists' main goal. Psychiatrists and psychopathologists –generally – had much loftier ideals than the reality of the insane asylums. Achim Thom, in *Erscheinungsformen und Widersprüche,* argues that the contradiction between a rehabilitative, curative standard and the repressive safe keeping praxis characterizes psychiatry in an especially glaring way up until the end of the 19th century (11-32).

[9] For the importance attributed to the scientific expert at the time see Becker, Chapter 1, 2 and 5. To gain a more in-depth view of psychiatrists' struggles with the legitimacy of their profession see Brown.

[10] An excellent work that explores this paradox in Fyodor Dostoevsky's work is Yuri Corrigan's *Dostoevsky and the Riddle of the Self.*

The Realist novels I examine, Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov*, Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Children* (*Otsy i deti*), Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin's *The Golovlevs* (*Gospoda Golovlevy*), and Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (*Brat'ia Karamazovy*), all present us with emotionally illegible characters. Unlike their psycho-pathologist counterparts, however, these authors intentionally imagined their characters to have inadequate, ambiguous emotional reactions (we can think, for example, of Oblomov anxiously postponing his marriage to Olga, or Bazarov feeling annoyed after he consents to participate in a potentially fatal duel). Even though a fictional narrator has potentially unlimited access into a characters' mind in a way that no psychiatrist could possibly have, these novelists intentionally pursue illegibility. I argue that these authors resisted the physiological turn and the idea that the brain is an organ that can simply be dissected and examined, by emphasizing, on the contrary, the ultimate impenetrability of a person's inner life. Their characters' affective illegibility is a truthful reflection of the labyrinth of our inner selves. This trend defies the expectations of clarity in psychological prose that critics at the time expected and that readers have been taught to expect. This dissertation then proposes that pervasive illegibility of character is a previously unidentified trait of Russian Realism, and uses *Oblomov, Fathers and Children, The Golovlevs,* and *The Brothers Karamazov* as illustrative examples.

In both the psychiatric and the literary descriptions of characters, it is the individuals' emotional lives that seem to be the crux of their illegibility. After all, feelings played a fundamental role in shaping both disciplines' underlying assumptions. On one hand, theories of feelings (*chuvstva*) and how they related to the human mind and personality abounded in early psychiatry. Long before Freud or trauma theories, the idea that strong feelings or harrowing events could damage the mind circulated widely.[11] Russian early psychiatry was steeped in a physiological and materialistic worldview, despite its shortcomings, and it tended to shun the idea of "mind" or "soul" (*dusha*) in favor of a less metaphysical "brain organ" (*mozgovoi organ*). Yet feelings were still held responsible for creating mysterious "lesions to the brain" that would then lead illnesses of the mind, or spirit (*dushevnye bolezni*) (Merten 135). On the other hand, affectivity had held an important place in Russian literature since the age of Sentimentalism. As Lidia Ginzburg stresses in her seminal book, *On Psychological Prose,* neoclassical poetics focused on contrasts between abstract aspirations and forces that opposed them, while Romanticism turned its attention to the individual personality. Realism brought interiority to the foreground, and emotions became relevant in a different way. The new focus of artistic analysis was on the "disjunction" (*nesovpadenie*) between behavior and feeling (Ginzburg 233-4). Characters who could feel one way and not act accordingly became the preferred object of investigation.

The illegible characters I examine not only feel one way and act another, but rather their feelings are an incongruous and disproportionate composition, which in turn makes them difficult to read. Not only is there disjunction (*nesovpadenie*) between feeling and behavior, but also, as in a grotesque decorative piece, the closer one looks the more incongruous details one notices. The characters' inner selves become more difficult to read the harder one tries. Therefore, I suggest the term grotesque affectivity to describe their illegible, unseemly selves. I propose to see the grotesque as an aesthetic, but especially as an affective category that played an essential role in nineteenth-century Russian Realism.[12] I also suggest that grotesque affectivity was a central feature in the characterization of patients in early psychiatric case study in Russia.

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[11] One early example is Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), who was greatly influential in Russia and who put forward the thesis of psychic disturbances being caused by an interplay between biographical conditions and external material and *emotional* forces (Merten 71-2). Furthermore, in the 1840s and 1850s it was believed that "external impulses of various provenances could call up traumatic experiences or emotional dispositions like love/sexuality, fear, grief, fright, illnesses, ambition etc. These would come to the fore alongside psychotic symptoms such as paranoia, hallucinations, and schizophrenia" (Merten 135). The role that strong emotions had in causing "brain fever" (нервная горячка), the disease that Ivan Karamazov suffers from and that leads him to hallucinate, is discussed in detail in Emery and Geballe (896-97).

I base my definition of the grotesque on several sources. First, I am indebted to the classic study by Wolfgang Kayser (*The Grotesque in Art and Literature,* 1966), which describes the grotesque as an estrangement of the familiar, "a world in which the realm of inanimate things is no longer separated from those of plants, animals, and human beings, and where the laws of statics, symmetry, and proportion are no longer valid" (21). Secondly, I follow Philip Thomson as he emphasizes "the *unresolved* nature of the […] conflict between comic and terrifying (or disgusting, repulsive, etc.)" as that which "helps to mark off the grotesque from other modes or categories of literary discourse" (21, emphasis in the original). Thus, not only is the grotesque capable of accommodating emotional contradictions, but this openness to affective conflict is precisely what separates it from other literary modes. Edwards and Graulund list the discordant feelings elicited by the grotesque in more detail: "The grotesque provokes conflicting responses: fascination and repugnance, compassion and disgust, sympathy and confusion. […] In this, grotesque is disturbing because it incites seemingly incompatible emotions" (78).[13] Seemingly incompatible emotions are no longer kept separate, and as Kayser argued, the laws of statics, symmetry, proportion are no longer valid: similarly, grotesque affectivity is characterized by disproportionate, disharmonious emotional reactions. The term grotesque affectivity thus describes an affective system that is dominated by irresolvable contradiction, which blurs traditional distinctions between feelings that are considered antagonistic, and thus has an incongruous and disquieting effect on other characters and the reader.[14]

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[12] Mikhail Bakhtin uses the designation "grotesque realism," but I employ this idea in somewhat different terms. Bakhtin considers the grotesque as intrinsically referring to the body and bodily excess. Furthermore, he understands grotesque exaggeration as an outrageous but essentially joyous device. I focus on grotesque affectivity rather than physicality, and underline the diverse range of feelings it provokes, without favoring the joyous as a category. What is significant for my current discussion, however, is that Bakhtin stresses the necessity for the grotesque to appear within a realistic narrative paradigm. In other words, a cadaver coming to life in a horror story conveys the horror, but it does not carry the uneasiness nor the ambivalence of such a macabre occurrence happening when it is unexpected, in a realistic, everyday setting. Bakhtin's discussion of grotesque realism can be found in Bakhtin, 303-67.

My analysis brings together Russian Realism and early psychiatry via grotesque affectivity and illegibility of character. Rather than considering the two disciplines' mutual influence in detail, I examine them side by side, as parallel reactions to the physiological turn that started in the 1840s and 1850s. Much of the scholarship on psychiatry and literature in Imperial Russia focuses on a later period, from the 1880s on (Engelstein, Mangold, Matich, Nicolosi, Popkin, Sirotkina), after specialized psychiatric journals had been founded and psychiatry had come into its own as a profession. Other critics, though fewer (Beer, Bogdanov, Merten, Sobol), have examined the historical and aesthetic connection between early psychiatry and Realist literature before the 1880s, concentrating precisely on the contemporaneous emergence of Realism, physiology, and early psychopathology. The period between the 1840s and the 1880s, when psychiatry was more heterogenous as a field, presents many interesting textual moments. Psychiatrists were not able to rely on their own press. Their psychopathological treatises and case histories were published in thick journals, or other miscellaneous publications (such as collections of forensic reports). Thus, they were written for a wider, non-specialized public. The connection between science, medicine, literature, and culture before specialization was still open and fluid (Merten 35). The textual strategies early psychiatrists had to adopt were different from those of their later colleagues, who were writing for other doctors, and therefore had to pay less attention to narrative and structure. Often, practitioners needed to explain their subject and use metaphors external to their field. The rigid structure of the medical case study did not yet dominate the field. As Cathy Popkin notes in her article "Hysterical Episodes," by the 1880s and 1890s most case histories were very similar, perhaps because they were too preoccupied with a fixed medical agenda: "to establish beyond dispute the perspicacity and expertise of the professional/scientific self" (216). Popkin is referring to the descriptive, prescriptive, and non-narrative psychiatric case studies that would be challenged by Freud.[15] Before the standardization of case histories, however, before psychiatrists published in specialized journals and had to respond to an official Psychiatric Society (whose first meeting was in 1887), their approaches to the discipline as a whole, and to the case study in particular, varied greatly. For example, Dr. V. Sabler (mostly active from the 1840s to the early 1850s) believed that case studies should be reported as narrative anecdotes rather than scientifically, in order to get a sense for the "mental sphere" of the patient, i.e., their intellect, will, moral capabilities, etc. (Merten 137); Prof. Toporov, however, who taught psychiatry at the Moscow University between 1842 to 1860, recommended moral and religious education as a cure for mental disturbances in young people (Iudin 52). By being less methodical, these psychopathological texts were more porous, more susceptible to external influences, including the influence of literature, both aesthetically and structurally. In this dissertation, I suggest that this collection of heterogenous texts represents a productive point of entry for understanding not only how nineteenth-century Russian culture and medicine thought about the limits of psychological exploration of interiority, but also how it sought to solve the problem of how to write about such an illegible self.

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[13] Two volumes have been published on the grotesque as summary and foundations of this genre: one written by Philip Thomson in 1972, and one edited by Justin Edwards and Rune Graulund, published in 2013. The latter does provide a somewhat broader approach, yet I find that Thomson's original reworking of Kayser and Bakhtin and his basic definition of the grotesque are still a productive point of departure for thinking about this slippery category. A succinct review of the changing understanding of grotesque in criticism and the seminal works that defined this category can be found in Krzychylkiewicz.

[14] In my exploration of affectivity, I draw on Sianne Ngai's theory of "ugly feelings" –such as envy, anxiety, and disgust– because by being "far less intentional or object-directed, [they are] thus more likely to produce political and aesthetic ambiguities than the passions in the philosophical canon" (20). While Ngai examines each ugly feeling in depth, however, I focus on how they come together with more canonical feelings, such as the "vehement passions" –anger, shame, grief, wonder, fear– described by Philip Fisher. I also rely on existing theoretical frameworks to explore particular problems in literary history, rooted in a specific time and place. Some of the theoretical works I draw on focus on single feelings (Lutz), their nature (Fisher), their relationship to modernity (Virno, Ngai, Berlant), or to theory (Massumi, Terada).

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[15] For an illuminating discussion and further references on how Freud changed psychiatric writing see Cohn, 38-57.

Realist writers were exploring similar questions in their novels. The novelists I consider created literary heroes that have become essential protagonists in Russian literature and culture: Oblomov, Bazarov, the Golovlevs, and the Karamazovs have all being the object of heated discussion. I argue that their complexity and ambiguity, which has proven so productive for interpretation, is directly dependent on their grotesque affective qualities and illegibility. As Thomson reminds us, the grotesque is "hard to take" and it encourages rationalization and defense mechanisms (3). We see this tendency in how these books have been received throughout the years. Many critics have performed readings that fill in the gaps, such as Dobroliubov's reading of *Oblomov,* or Pisarev's reading of *Fathers and Children*.[16] The need to fill in the gaps and define these characters more precisely, to *read* them, signals the ambiguity that is left by their illegibility. *Oblomov, Fathers and Children, The Golovlevs,* and *The Brothers Karamazovs* create affective gaps that produce disconcertedness, make us uneasy and demand to be filled, but that are ultimately unfillable. This infinite search for meaning keeps readers coming back to these novels over and over again.

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[16] A similar example is Belinsky's reading of Dostoevsky's *The Double.*

In the first chapter, I read a selection of psychiatric texts, taken from disparate publications that span from the 1840s to the 1880s. I explore new developments in medicine and psychopathology, their cultural reception, and their function as a heterogeneous, but connected body of texts. In Chapters 2 and 3, I examine the "emotionally illegible" individual. In the former, I examine compassion and rationality as approaches to read Ivan Goncharov's most famous work, *Oblomov* (1859). In the latter, I consider attempts –and failures– by the other characters to interpret, to read, the infamous protagonist of Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Children* (1862), Bazarov. I consider Bazarov in his illegibility as the harbinger of contagion. In both I examine how grotesque affectivity is intertwined with a grotesque aesthetic. In Chapters 4 and 5 I look at the degenerating gentry family, a main concern in Russian psychopathology of the 1870s and 1880s. The fourth chapter focuses on Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin's *The Golovlevs* (1875-1880). Iudushka represents a different type of illegible character, he is painfully illegible to the other characters, but not to the reader. I show how the entire narrative structure of the novel hinges upon recurring failed attempts to read him and in that way break the spiral of Golovlev death that all the characters seem to be trapped in. The fifth chapter examines Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80). In it, I consider how illegibility and empathy go hand in hand in the novel: the Karamazov brothers in their journeys towards active love need to learn to accept people even though they are not able to read them. The message that Zosima preaches is that others can be disgusting, contemptible, and illegible and yet they need to be brought back into the fold of Christian love.

By exploring the grotesque affective connection between early psychiatry and Realist literature I hope, on the one hand, to offer a fresh perspective on four canonical novels, which reframes how we think about character construction and psychological exploration in Russian Realism. On the other, I bring to the fore several early psychiatric texts and suggest that they can represent a productive gateway to a discussion about affectivity, narrative and the mid-nineteenth century understanding of the mind.

Chapter One

Problems of Legibility in Early Psychiatric Case Histories

Who wouldn't shudder upon seeing, in human form,
a being altogether foreign to them in reason and consciousness?
Galich, *Kartina cheloveka*

As an empirical discipline, early Russian psychiatry hoped to approach (and solve) the problem of irrationality scientifically (Todes 48). Yet it had to concede to the limits of how deeply one can penetrate into someone's soul.[17] In his lectures, I. M. Balinskii, considered one of the founders of Russian psychiatry, stated that psychiatrists must discover as much as possible about a patient's physical and moral life in order to make a precise diagnosis.[18] Even so, as far as what factors might act on the organism and as a consequence cause mental illness, in Balinskii's view much was left about which we are completely in the dark or we understand very little (40). A similar sentiment was expressed by Dr. A. U. Freze in his 1874 rebuttal to an 1872 review published in the journal *Knowledge* (*Znanie*) of the first edition of his book *Essay on Forensic Psychology* (*Ocherk sudebnoi psikhologii,* 1871). His book struck the reviewer as being too metaphysical, an accusation very common at the time, which can be equated with retrograde and based in philosophical musings rather than hard science, i.e., physiology. Freze protested and defended his approach. In order to illustrate the limits of unaided materialism in understanding the workings of the soul, Freze quotes *Mental Pathologies* (1861)*,* a well-respected work by the German neurologist and psychiatrist, Wilhelm Griesinger*:* "Если-б мы даже действительно знали все, что происходит в мозге при его деятельности, если бы могли проследит' во всех их подробностях все химические, электрические и т.д. процессы, – то и тогда даже это не повело бы ни к чему (Even if we truly understood all of the brain's activity, if we could trace every detail of its chemical, electrical, and other processes – even that wouldn't lead us to any conclusions, qtd. in XI). What these doctors are hinting at is the ultimate illegibility of someone's interiority, no matter how much scientific data is available to us.

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[17] Peter Pozefvsky in *The Nihilist Imagination* notes how the word "soul" (*dusha*) was still used by radicals such as Pisarev and other editors of *Russian Word* up until the late 1850s (48).

[18] The lectures were originally published as lithographs in 1858-59 (Iudin 49), and then as a book in 1958.

Despite such admissions as to the constraints of the profession, psychiatrists were fierce defenders of their unique position when it came to identifying and curing mental illness.[19] In an article that appeared in the *Medical Herald* (*Meditsinskii vestnik*) more than a decade before the aforementioned book, Freze talked about the importance of the psychiatrist as mediator between the ill and the healthy, because "Сумасшедший уже не тот человек, каким был прежде, не тот, каким мы его знали… человек, внутренняя жизнь которого должна нам казаться тёмною, непонятною и нередко нелепою (the insane is not the person they used to be, they are not the person we used to know… [now] they are a person whose inner life to us must seem dark, incomprehensible and often absurd… 183). If understanding a patient's interiority is ultimately impossible, at least the expert psychiatrist can make a better educated guess than the layman. Psychiatrists were positioning themselves as the best intermediaries, and interpreters, between mental illness and the general public. During this period, Russian psychiatrists took it upon themselves to find the most effective way to explain this "dark, incomprehensible, and often absurd" interiority to everyone else.

Lidia Ginzburg argued that the basic principle of the classical nineteenth century psychological novel was explanation (259). Yet, some of the most popular Russian novels of the period feature a protagonist whose inner life was *not* fully explained, and who often left readers and critics divided as to how to interpret their feelings and actions. As a matter of fact, as Irina Sirotkina notes in *Diagnosing Literary Genius,* many fictional characters in Realist novels behave, think, and feel in such puzzling ways that Russian psychiatrists were frequently inclined to see similarities between these characters and their mentally ill patients. Better said, since the literary, philosophical, and scientific culture the psychiatrists were immersed in influenced how they perceived and understood mental illness, we can say that these doctors recognized similarities between characters of Realist novels and how they, as specialists, perceived and portrayed of mentally ill patients in their case histories. The influence of literature over psychiatry (Nicolosi), and vice versa (Merten, Popkin), has received adequate scholarly attention. But both disciplines are also cultural reactions to the existential struggle between metaphysics and materialism that was taking place at the time in Russian culture.

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[19] For the importance attributed to the scientific expert at the time, including psychiatrists, see Becker, Chapter 1, 2 and 5. To gain a more in-depth view of psychiatrists' struggle with the legitimacy of their profession, see Brown.

What Psychiatrists Wanted

We could argue, tongue in cheek, that psychiatrists did not know what they wanted. In trying to describe what they understood to be a complex and contradictory affective system in their patients, psychiatrists were pursuing multiple goals at the same time. On one hand, they endeavored to be interpreters, who could correctly translate the confusing feelings of their patients into well-defined symptoms. This "translation" would not only cure mental illness but also to make their mentally ill patients legible to the public. For example, *The Medical Herald* in January 1862 announces the founding in December 1861 of the Saint Petersburg Psychiatric Society. Among the main goals of the society, educating other doctors and the public, as well as dispelling prejudices in the public about insanity, mental patients, the insane asylum (35), figure prominently. This was not an easy task. Part of the problem was the limitations that psychiatry as a science was subjected to due to lack of access to their subject of study, the human psyche. It was generally agreed upon that dissecting a brain was a good start, but not nearly enough to truly understand the human mind. Psychiatry was based on observation and self-observation (Freze, *Ocherk,* 1).[20] But doctors believed that patients could not be trusted to conduct the self-observation that psychiatrists needed in a reliable way. In a different 1861 article on the connection between menstruation and mental illness, Freze complains that "Помешанные вообще редко жалуются на свои субъективные ощущения, а потому подобные явления могли и ускользнуть от нашего внимания" (In general, mentally ill people rarely complain about their subjective sensations, and that's why certain occurrences might have escaped our attention*;* 100). Balinskii warns his students that patients lie and dissimulate, or at the very least they tell a one-sided story (38). As Fisher points out: "Therapeutic cultures are always cultures of suspicion, because they begin by assuming that we can never be the authoritative tellers of our own life story" (45). In the case of psychiatric patients, the problem of reliable retelling was compounded with a problem of faulty perception.

At the same time, psychiatry as a discipline was just emerging, and psychiatrists had to defend their role as experts and protect their specialized knowledge. In this period the new psychiatrists faced major challenges. They were trying to convince a "still doubting and largely illiterate public" not only of the *physiological* bases of mental illness, but also of the efficacy of isolation as a form of care for their patients. In order to accomplish this, they had to make a convincing argument regarding the *similarities* between mental and physical illnesses. By contrast, however, to achieve control over psychiatric institutions they were forced to stress the *differences* between mental and nervous illnesses and other disorders (Brown 167). In other words, as they were endeavoring to translate their patients’ abnormal, grotesque affectivity into diagnoses and to make this process accessible to the public and other doctors, these practitioners also strove to establish the idea that only sophisticated readers such as themselves could correctly interpret these aberrant feelings. As a consequence of these contradictory interests, in psychiatric case histories the emotional distance between the patient and the world is rarely bridged in these early studies, and rather than a fully satisfying translation (or explanation), we are often confronted with the representation of a patient whose interiority is on a spectrum of legibility.

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[20] In a similar way Lidia Ginzburg pointed out that "the psychological novel of the era took the point of view of its hero, who was depicted from within. Its material was the self-aware and self-observant individual" (334-5).

Affective Conflicts

In early Russian psychiatry, insanity was seen as the manifestation of two possible conflicts: internal and/or external. An internal conflict meant a lack of coherence and harmony between actions, thoughts, and feelings, as well as a lack of consistency between feelings. An external conflict meant a barrier, a lack of mutual understanding between the individual and society. As Freze writes in his 1861 article “Это ‘существовать иначе' заключает в себе всю сущность болезни” (This “existing differently” comprises the essence of the illness; 183). A mentally ill individual was seen as an outsider, and, like other outsiders, one who defies societal norms. Laura Engelstein gives the example of the criminal or the sexual deviant: “The criminal satisfies individual desire or private need at the community’s expense. The sexual offender is a kind of moral entrepreneur who achieves personal gratification in defiance of collective norms” (93). The insane, it was believed, could not even understand or, more importantly, *relate* to the community’s needs or collective norms. Mental illness, it was believed, completely blocked the capacity for emotional reciprocity. Yet shared feelings are the basis of societal relations (Fisher

68). This "sick" affectivity, which lacked reciprocity and was internally incoherent, is precisely what was perceived as the gulf between the mentally ill and the healthy.

Psychiatrists believed that the insane formed their ideas following the same laws as everyone else, but the "tools" they used were different, sick. Mental illness was thought of as an illness of perception, a disturbance in how the external stimuli were received and processed by the mind. Following this thinking, a mentally ill person was often talked about as someone who feels**,** thinks, and desires differently.[21] This difference is the basis of the perceived emotional barrier between healthy and sick individuals. As Freze underlines in his 1861 article, after listing the newly arisen, problematic characteristics in a person after a nervous or mental break: "С появлением этого противоречия уничтожается начало и возможность действительного сожития сумасшедших с здоровым" (The appearance of such contradictions destroys from the very beginning the possibility of a genuinely shared life between the mentally ill and the healthy; 183). This emphasis on unresolvable contradiction resonates with our grotesque reading of how the affectivity of their patients was portrayed by psychiatrists during this period.

Abnormal affectivity was believed to play a crucial part in these contradictions. "Sick" feelings were considered both a cause and a consequence of illness: long before Freud, the idea that strong, unruly passions could damage the mind circulated widely. One early promoter of this paradigm was Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), who posited that psychic disturbances were caused by an interplay of biographical conditions and external, material, and *emotional* forces (Merten 71-2). At the same time, the opposite opinion was just as popular, in that a mentally ill person was believed to be dominated by inexplicable emotions: either complete indifference or violent emotions that were an inadequate response to the situation and that contradicted each other. What indifference and violent (inappropriate) feelings have in common is that they denote a barrier between the one who's experiencing them and the people around them. According to Fisher, passions are characterized by a lack of reciprocity, fairness, and universality (218). In other words, they isolate the individual who's experiencing them and prevent them from relating to others, listening to reason, and seeing the bigger picture. Indifference acts in a similar way. Indifference inhibits reciprocity as much as a vehement passion does, and both preclude us from achieving a full view on the situation, one that includes other people.

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[21] A good example of the understanding of mental illness at the time is Freze's 1861 article, pp. 180-85.

When a state of emotional isolation ends, we feel shame: "It is a shame directed at the evidence we come to remember later as a telling revelation to others that reciprocity had ceased to exist in our eyes" (Fisher 68). Mental patients were reported to feel shame in their moments of lucidity because they understood how they had made themselves alien to everyone else. Shame is a cornerstone of emotional and societal reciprocity, and therefore a symptom of health. For example, we can look at a case of a young man described by Dr. Freze in "Case of a dubious mental condition" (*Sluchai somnitel'nogo dushevnogo sostoiania*). This man pretends not to be in his right mind in order to avoid punishment for a crime. Significantly, Freze notes that: "Душевные чувства его не отупели, он доступен порывам грусти, стыда, раскаяния" (His emotions have not gone blunt: he's subject to bouts of sadness, embarrassment, repentance; 20). This is an essential part of the diagnosis: his feelings are sharp and he feels the "appropriate" shame, therefore, he is still in a "healthy" mindset.

As Ngai notes, impassivity and indifference are unsettling (14). Very often in case histories the patient is characterized by indifference, dullness to everything around them, a lack of connection to the external world and other people. On the other hand, as Fisher points out, the opposite is true as well: when an emotion is too intense or too prolonged, it causes people to worry (45). For example, in the case history "On the Mental Distress of Non-Commissioned Officer Pavel A-o" (*O dushevnom rasstroistve unter-ofitsiera Pavla A-o*, 1872), Dr. Freze describes a gentleman who committed various crimes without apparent motive and was declared "not in the right mind" by the court. To understand A-o, according to his psychiatrist, we need to understand his sense of justice. His actions may seem erratic and incomprehensible, but there is a key to understanding him: he is dominated by an unrelenting sense of justice, a feeling that is so strong it erases his sense of reciprocity towards others. In other words, A-o will defy societal norms and even laws in order to appease his drive to justice. Finally, when someone experiences a grotesque mixture of contradictory emotions it is also confusing, and possibly upsetting for others. In an 1865 article Dr. Merzhevskii describes a patient in a manic state: his emotions are constantly changing and this has an effect on his appearance as well. "Лицо принимает через это различные выражения, но чаще всего на нем отпечатывается выражение удивления, самодовольства, изредка только сменяясь выражением неудовольствия и гнева" (His face keeps taking different expressions, but most often he wears an expression of surprise, self-satisfaction, only from time to time his expression changes to displeasure and anger; 13). Because these expressions, and the feelings they depict, do not conventionally correspond to the external situation, they are effectively illegible.

Notes of a Doctor (1846)

An early example of an original Russian psychiatric case history is *Notes of a Doctor* (*Zapiski doktora,* 1846)[22] by Pavel Petrovich Malinovskii (1818-1868). Malinovskii worked in the St. Petersburg psychiatric hospital and was a strong defender of praxis over theory. In 1847, he published the first Russian manual on psychiatry, called *Insanity Described as It Appears to a Doctor in his Praxis* (*Pomeshatel'stvo, opisannoe tak, kak ono iavliaetsia vrachu, v praktike*). This book, far from being relegated to a specialized reading public, was reviewed by all the major thick journals, effectively entering the cultural and literary discourse of its time.[23] Malinovskii was a progressive practitioner, well-read in the latest European developments in his discipline. He decried the brutal treatment of the mentally ill and called for more humane practices. In his manual, he launched an appeal to psychiatrists to be just and to view the patient, not as rich or poor, deserving or undeserving, but as a sick person, who can't speak from themselves and for whose healing the psychiatrist alone is responsible (3-4).

Notes of a Doctor is a peculiar work. First of all, we have trouble placing it in terms of genre. It seems to draw on many genres and inspirations at once. We can note that Nekrasov's *Physiology of St. Petersburg* (*Fiziologiia Peterburga*) was published in 1845, Dostoevsky's *Double* (*Dvoinik*) in February 1846, and Goncharov's *An Ordinary Story* (*Obyknovennaia istoriia*) in 1847. *Notes of a Doctor* unfolds in a space between feuilleton, physiological sketch, family history, psychiatric case study, and realist novella. It opens with an author's note. In the first sentence, Malinovskii declares: "Я пишу не под диктовку воображения, а рассказываю то, что было" (I am not writing following my imagination, on the contrary, I am reporting everything as it happened; v). He also states that he is not writing just to satisfy the curiosity of the reader (vi), but that he hopes to educate the public regarding the "scourge of humanity" that is insanity. The book is educational in nature, but aims to reach a wider public than his more specialized manual. Our doctor is especially hoping to help in cases where, if signs of insanity are detected early, the illness can be prevented or cured (v). In the original plan, this is the first of a series, and every book is bound to present the reader with a different story or case history. This first volume, however, is the only one that was actually published. The story in this first book is called "The Life of an Ordinary Man" (*Zhizn' obyknovennogo cheloveka*) and it follows the life of an "ordinary man," Adatov. But it is not Adatov who suffers from mental illness, rather it is his wife, Nadezhda, and their children. In consonance with psychiatric ideas of the time, Nadezhda and the children are emotionally illegible, their way to feel and understand the world is completely different from ours and we have no access into their interiority. As Fisher observes, an author will often set between the reader and an emotionally blocked character or situation a figure to supply a missing emotional layer, a "register." The register's affective response is supposed to model the reader's response, and thus relieve them of the anxiety of not knowing what to feel (145). Adatov is the protagonist, and readers have full access into his thoughts and feelings. The narrator tells us that "он мог чувствовать и чувствовать сильно" (he could feel, and feel strongly; 13). Throughout the story, the reader is frequently invited to imagine what he is feeling, to sympathize with him, to assume his perspective in relation to his wife's madness. He functions as a register.

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[22] A true testament to the interconnection between literature and psychiatry in this early period, *Notes of a Doctor* is mentioned by Vissarion Belinskii in his "Review of Russian Literature 1846" ("Vzgliad na russkuiu literaturu 1846") among the notable works published that year. The critic, however, accuses it of being a "melodrama" and being artlessly written (46).

[23] This work, which was initially published as a collection of separate excerpts published in the *Military-Medical Journa*l (*Voenno-meditsinskii zhurnal*), where Malinovskii was an editor, appeared as a book in 1847 and was reviewed in *Notes of the Fatherland* in 1848, t. 58, n 5, Otdel VI, pp. 37-8. The second edition, published in 1855, just 8 years later, received many more reviews: *Sankt-peterburgskie vedomosti*, 1855, n 271, p. 1458; *Sovremennik,* 1855, t. 53, n 10, in "Bibliografia," pp. 47-59; *Biblioteka dlia chteniia,* 1856, v. 136, March April, in "Literaturnaia letopis'" pp. 38-42; *Otechestvennye zapiski,* 1856, v. 54, n 2, in "Bibliograficheskaia khronika," pp. 54-60; *Trudy vol'nogo ekonomicheskogo obshchestva,* 1855, v. 4, 3, pp. 97-99.

My argument, however, is that because Adatov is a non-expert observer, he cannot correctly "read" the mentally ill people that surround him. As a consequence, he experiences contradictory feelings and since this emotional contradiction remains unresolved, he narratively fails, as a register, to orient us on our affective map. The narrative, far from being didactically clear, remains affectively grotesque and ambiguous. Another point of view in the story is the author/narrator's: in addition to offering medical and scientific opinions and clarifications, he sympathizes with Adatov in all circumstances and feels great compassion for his "misfortunes." The narrator's function is to amplify Adatov's feelings, to bring attention to them. But because Adatov's feelings are contradictory, bringing more attention to them does not solve the affective inconsistencies we perceive. In this sense, the educational goal of the story might still work on a rational level, but emotionally we become no better readers of mental illness than we were at the beginning of the book. We have some indications on how to feel, but no definite direction, and Nadezhda and the children remain as emotionally inscrutable for us as they are for Adatov.

The story is divided in two parts, one called "Wife," and one called "Children." As mentioned above, the author uses this semi-fictional form to illustrate certain points. The first point is that if Adatov had been better educated in terms of mental disturbances, his wife could have been cured early on. Her illness, however, had too much time to progress, and when the couple finally contacts a psychiatrist, it is already too late. Second, only a psychiatrist can cure mental illness. Non-specialized doctors are likely to use out-of-date, inhumane treatment that will cause irreparable harm to someone who is already sick. Finally, by recounting Adatov's tragic experience, the author is hoping to discourage "healthy" people from having children with mental patients, because their offspring will be plagued by mental illness as well.[24] The pull of these different arguments contributes to the ambiguity of the text.

Wife

When Adatov first meets Nadezhda he cannot fully understand certain eccentricities in her personality:

> Это было странности характера Надежды, странности, если могу сказать, во всем существе этой девушки. От природы нервная и чрезвычайно чувствительная, она иногда была чужда всему, что около ее делается, нечувствительна ни к сильной радости, ни к сильному горю; иногда же каждая малость ее печалила, огорчала; Надежда Павловна была то резва, жива и шаловлива как ребенок; то по несколько часов, безмолвно просиживала на месте; то смеялась от души всякой бездельнице; то вдруг делалась задумчивою, или обо всем говорила серьезно, строго, …; самые нежные ласки и участие часто у ней сменялись ледяною холодностью.
>
> This was Nadezhda’s strangeness of character, a strangeness, I would say, that extended to the girl’s whole being. Naturally nervous and extremely sensitive, she sometimes seemed alien to everything that was happening around her, unmoved [but literally, “not feeling,”] by either strong joy or strong grief; at times every small thing saddened her, afflicted her; Nadezhda Pavlovna was at times as frisky, vivacious and playful like a child; at times she sat silently in one place for several hours; or she laughed heartily at any trifle; then suddenly

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[24] Among other arguments in favor of the confinement of mentally ill people in asylums, which were generally more focused on therapeutic benefits, the idea circulated that “without psychiatrists to watch over them, the mad would invariably copulate resulting in a dramatic increase in their number” (Brown 122).

> she would become thoughtful, or spoke about everything seriously, severely...; her most tender caresses and attentive interest would often turn into icy coldness. (14)

A psychiatrist would have identified these as early symptoms of emotional instability related to mental illness, but for Adatov, these contradictory emotional states are illegible. He is in love and so decides to ignore these "signs" and marry Nadezhda. The marriage initially is very happy: Nadezhda is a model of meekness and domesticity. At this point, Nadezhda is, if flat, a likeable character, because the "register," Adatov, likes her. After the birth of their fourth son, however, her "strangeness" reemerges: she becomes exceptionally irritable, suffers from insomnia, the blood drains from her head at the smallest unpleasantness, her face and eyes get red, her lips tremble and she can then barely keep herself together. Luckily, these are only episodes, and once they pass, she returns to be the good wife and mother she used to be (20). Adatov is not an expert, he is a naïve observer, and he experiences these emotional swings without understanding them. Because he cannot read these paradoxical emotional states, he cannot provide an adequate cure/response for them.

One unfortunate afternoon, Nadezhda suffers a psychotic break from which she does not come back. Adatov feels scared of her and completely alien to her. He seeks the help of the local doctor. The narrator informs the reader that this doctor is not aware of the most recent developments in psychiatry and tries to cure his patient with what the narrator condemns as "barbaric means," such as frequent ice baths and bloodletting, and finally by chaining Nadezhda in her own room. When Adatov can't take it anymore, he decides to travel to St. Petersburg to visit a professional psychiatrist. It is only this medical professional, a psychiatrist, who can decipher Nadezhda's emotional and mental state and cure her. The psychiatrist diagnoses Nadezhda with an illness that is quite literally a "reversal of feeling." In such cases, he explains: "все способности души действуют на изнанку, превратно; прежняя привязанность и любовь переходит в ненависть; бывшие желания и склонности меняются в отвращение; предметы и лица, напоминавши прошедшее их тревожат; утешительные воспоминания делаются для них предметами ужаса” (all the abilities of the soul act as if inside out, perversely; what was previously affection and love turns into hatred; former desires and inclinations become disgust; objects and faces reminding them of the past are troubling [the patients]; comforting memories become the objects of horror; 32). We see how the psychiatrist is able to understand these seemingly inexplicable, conflicting emotions and translate them into explainable symptoms of mental illness. These symptoms were visible to the provincial doctor and Adatov as well, but to them they remained illegible emotional aberrations that did not cohere into a sensible narrative and therefore did not bear any pathological or therapeutic meaning.

The psychiatrist manages to temporarily cure Adatov’s wife, but unfortunately too much damage has already been done. About a year later, while Nadezhda seems perfectly healthy, this new doctor –who appears to have almost supernatural insight– observes that something is amiss, while Adatov notices nothing and chooses to believe the doctor is mistaken (39). When a second break is approaching, the gulf that forms between Adatov and his wife is even greater: she becomes a scary, mysterious creature, performing acts of madness in secret. She laughs off the idea of getting treated again, she is gaining weight (a sign of health), but at the same time her face is getting pale and puffy. The idea that mentally ill patients will lie and try to hide their illness, as we have seen, was widespread among psychiatrists of this period. This is partially why, without a professional, illnesses such as Nadezhda’s risk going untreated. And it is in fact the doctor who finally “catches” her being mad. One afternoon as he sits in the living room with Adatov, he manages to spy into Nadezhda’s sitting room through a mirror, positioning himself in such a way that she cannot see him. Not only does the psychiatrist understand what the layman cannot, but he can also see into spaces where nobody else can see. He spots Nadezhda sitting alone, smiling from time to time, talking to herself, then surreptitiously approaching a snuffbox, forgotten by the doctor, and taking a sniff. This is enough for the doctor to question her maid, find out that the mistress' gums have been bleeding for several days and she's been sniffing tobacco in secret. The psychiatrist thus diagnoses her with another attack of madness, and scurvy. She passes away soon after, unable to recognize her husband and children. She is depicted as emotionally and mentally blocked off from all her loved ones and in the end, Adatov is deprived even of the chance of saying goodbye to her.

Children

In the second part of the text, we witness the ruin and death of all seven of the couple's children. The oldest daughter, her father's favorite, is the only one who has not inherited "her mother's illness." In a tragic twist of faith, however, she gets tricked into marrying a man with a "black soul" (59), she moves away with him and later dies – annihilated by her husband's "низкие, презрительные поступки" (base and contemptuous deeds; 74). Adatov's second oldest son, sickly and of weird character, starts showing the first signs of madness when he's serving in the army, and dies shortly thereafter. After these two deaths, Adatov feels very lonely among his remaining children, because the only one he could ever relate to was his eldest daughter. Another son, a lover of mean practical jokes, becomes an alcoholic, and accidentally causes two of his sisters to fall out of a boat into the lake. Only one of them is rescued, while the other tragically drowns. Sometime after the accident, he commits suicide by getting drunk, running for miles in the snow without a jacket, and freezing to death (93).[25] The sister who survives was already characterized by a face that expressed “absolute indifference.” She never gets over the shock and lives out the rest of her days in a silent stupor, stuck in an expression of constant fear and terror (88). Finally, the oldest son, Vladimir, described as a simple-minded man, also gets tricked into marrying an evil, calculating woman. After the marriage, “болезнь, переданная матерью и бесчеловечное обращение Прасковьи Васильевны, гибельно действовали на молодого Адатова- …его способности быстро угасали, он начинал жить чисто животно-растительной жизнью…” (the illness passed on to him by his mother and the inhumane treatment he receives from his wife, Praskovia Vasilevna, had a disastrous effect on young Adatov. His capacities quickly faded, and he began living life like an animal or a plant; 99). The story tragically ends with Adatov Senior’s death, shortly after he receives news from the battalion where his youngest son was serving, saying that he too suffered an attack of madness (105). The very final image we have is Vladimir, forgotten in the church after his father’s funeral, by then not a full person anymore, but a creature (109). None of the children, except the eldest daughter, have any interiority, or feelings. They are presented in the story almost as symptoms, as ramifications of the negative effects that Nadezhda’s illness has on Adatov. Our protagonist has no emotional connection to his children. Despite being surrounded by them, he cannot feel anything for them. We see here two different emotional reactions: in relation to Nadezhda, Adatov feels a succession of incompatible, conflicting feelings: love, admiration, fear, pity, repulsion, and despair. For his children, he feels quiet pity, but mostly indifference. His own emotional inadequacy as register is starting to emerge: not feeling love for one’s children is, after all, an “abnormal” emotional reaction.

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[25] We can’t help but wonder if Saltykov-Shchedrin drew inspiration from this episode for Iudushka Golovev’s demise in his 1880 novel *The Golovlev Family.*

Adatov

Adatov represents a layman's reaction to the emotional barrier created by mental illness. When his wife has a psychotic break, he does not know how to relate to her, and he does not relate to any of his children except for the one who is not ill. At the end of part I, after his wife has died, Adatov, in despair, worries about his children, because he knows that madness is said to be hereditary. The section ends with the question: "каково же быть на его месте" (can you imagine being in his place; 45)? For us as readers, it is actually not so easy to answer this question. Because Adatov represents the non-expert point of view, he does not have the clarity of vision that the psychiatrist or the narrator has. As a result, he experiences conflicting and contradictory feelings throughout. His constant fluctuation between joy and despair, grief and repulsion, contempt and love makes Adatov's affective system confusing and hard to navigate.

In the throes of death, Adatov thinks about his life and children and realizes that he shouldn't have married Nadezhda: "Страшно вступать в брачные связи с семействами, где есть или были помешанные…" (It is scary to marry someone from a family where there are or have been cases of insanity…). He wishes this fate won't befall anyone else: "Дай Бог, чтобы никто не раскаялся горько, дай Бог, чтобы никто не заплатил за свою ошибку так же страшно и дорого, как я" (God grant that no one else should feel such bitter regret, God grant that no one else should pay for their mistakes as horribly and costly as I did; 108). After his wife's death, however, he had declared that the only human feeling that had not betrayed him was his love for his wife (44). While the author might have intended this to be simply a cautionary tale against the illusory happiness to be found with a sick wife, Adatov's initial feelings of love and happiness, and the joy he experiences when she is cured after her first break contradict that idea of a cautionary tale, and these feelings of happiness and love exist in the text with the same urgency as his feelings of despair. At the end of the story this affective contradictions remain unresolved. As an emotional "register," Adatov fails because his feelings are inconsistent and contradictory. Thus, in the end, despite the mediation of a psychiatrist character and a psychiatrist narrator/author, Adatov proves unable to read Nadezhda and the children. An unbridgeable emotional gulf is established between them, leaving our protagonist, and the reader, lost and alienated on their affective map.

The emotional illegibility that defines the mentally ill characters in this early example, as well as the ultimate impossibility of reciprocal understanding between them and the healthy characters who surround them will remain a central feature of psychiatric case histories for the following three decades. In particular, the intrinsic contradiction and illegibility of mentally ill patients' inner lives in the view of psychiatry is well illustrated by an example from the 1870s, Doctor S.I. Steinberg's case study "Melancholy, Feeble-Mindedness and Murder" (*Melankholia, slaboumie i ubiistvo*).

"Melancholy, Feeble-Mindedness and Murder" (1872)

This case history is structured as follows: first Dr. S. I. Steinberg gives us a very short summary of the facts: "T" has been arrested and while in prison he killed a fellow prisoner. This statement is followed by T's biography, which is told mostly from the patient's perspective, with dialogues and quotations from him added verbatim. This section constitutes a life history, complete with first person reports on what happened. When Steinberg tells portions of T's life story he mostly abstains from commenting on them. After this section, Steinberg proceeds to report the history of the trial and the mistakes of the doctors who first examined T. Steinberg says that T's case and T himself have been misread. At this point, the doctor re-tells all the events and comments that he had exposed with minimum commentary before, *translating* them for us into a series of symptoms or indications of T's mental illness. His translation is twofold: on one hand he clarifies various statements T had made, which were reported verbatim; on the other, the doctor explains how other people related to his patient, how they understood, or *read* him, and how they were mistaken. After almost ten pages of translation the doctor reaches the final, incontrovertible verdict: T suffers from melancholy and feeble-mindedness, he is an inveterate onanist, and he was not in the right mind at the time of the crime (38).

There are a few moments in the case history that are especially relevant for our purposes: firstly, the incapacity of everyone around T to relate to him, and, conversely, his incapacity to relate to others. Throughout his life, there are constant instances of people deriding him because "у него в голове не так, как у всех" (his head didn't work like everyone else's; 23). The doctor explains how his puzzling behavior should have been read instead. Second, what confused everyone, except the expert psychiatrist, is that someone who always seemed meek and good-natured, who loved to spend time reading sacred texts, could suddenly turn into a murderer. "*Такое явное противоречие между характером и направлением субъекта и его действиями* не разъяснено исследованием врачей" (The doctors' examination could not account for *such an obvious contradiction between personality and disposition of the subject, and his actions*; 28, emphasis in the original). Third, after proving that T suffers from feeble-mindedness and melancholy, the doctor comes to another significant conclusion: if we have proven that T is not a pretender, it follows that we must: "придавать значение правды всему тому, что он говорит" (consider everything he says as the truth; 33). Steinberg clarifies that it doesn't matter whether what T is saying is the objective truth, because he experiences it and reports it exactly as the truth.

This is clearly linked to the idea, commonly accepted by the psychiatry of the time, that mental illness is a problem in the experience or perception of the world. A mentally ill person experiences the external stimuli of the world differently (*inache*), but this doesn't make these experiences less real for them, thus causing an immense gulf between themselves and everyone else. The question of reciprocity that Fisher foregrounds is central for mental illness as it was understood during this time. For the mentally ill portrayed in these case histories, reciprocity of emotions is lost. T shows a complete lack of understanding of normal societal relations, and the absence of a feeling of empathy, regret, which *always* appear in a "normal" person after an event such as murder (36). Steinberg's patient is also amoral: "У Т-ки нет нравственных чувств" (T did not have any moral feelings; 37). He doesn't care about his family and the doctor "demonstrates" that he hasn't cared for them for a long time. His feelings apparently vanished as a consequence of the long separation from his family.

At the same time, we see a perceived lack of emotional reciprocity alongside a perceived deceptiveness. While T lacks the ability to healthily relate to others, he is aware of other people's offenses towards him. He doesn't like it when people tell him he's not right in the head, he complains about being put to bread and water for more than a week as a punishment in the military, and he finally kills the cell mate who abuses him, when all of his complaints to the guards are ignored. In the psychiatric hospital, when he is 36 and his condition has gotten worse, according to Steinberg he restrains himself from talking to himself out loud when other people are present, "чтобы не смеялись над ним и не признали его сумасшедшим" (so that they won't laugh at him and they won't perceive him as crazy; 38). This idea at first seems to contradict the perceived complete self-absorption of mental illness, yet it supports the other popular idea that patients tend to lie and hide their illness.

Finally, if other people don’t understand T, T also doesn’t understand himself, or his illness. When he is asked how he landed at the psychiatric ward after his first break, when he was 17, he says he doesn’t know (23). As a soldier at times he feels really bad, especially at night. The doctor asks what would happen then and T replies “тоска была, ноет, ноет, сам не знаю, чтобы с собою сделал, а тут еще за рулем смотри” (I felt such melancholy, it ached and ached, I didn’t know what to do with myself, and then I still had to mind the helm; 24)! The only comfort he had was reading sacred books, but for this his companions would make fun of him. This case history is a cautionary tale not about mental illness, but about ignorance regarding mental illness. T and the people around him equally needed the help of a psychiatrist, or translator, to make sense of what was happening. By showing over and over how he could not connect emotionally, and people were baffled by his reactions, Steinberg demonstrates that he was pushed to commit a crime he wouldn’t have committed otherwise.

Conclusions

These case histories illustrate the fundamental illegibility of the interiority of mentally ill patients according to psychiatry: first, patients were imagined to lie and deceive, they were not trusted as “authoritative tellers of their own story” (Fisher 45), which adds a barrier between observation and reporting. Second, if psychiatry, or physiological psychology, is empirically based on observation and self-observation, but the psychiatrist –the observer– and the patient –the self-observer– have two completely different understanding of truth, the contradiction between their visions is intrinsically unresolvable. We are left with a problem of methodology as well as of narrative point of view. Despite proclaiming themselves as indispensable mediators, or translators, between the public and the mentally ill, when writing their case histories, psychiatrists grappled with both scientific and narratological problems without achieving a satisfying solution.

Chapter Two

Reframing Legibility Through Compassion in Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov*

> Many people do not like how calmly the author
> approaches reality, and they are ready at once to pronounce
> a harsh sentence about the lack of sympathy in his style.
> Dobroliubov, "What Is Oblomovism"

Oblomov is Ivan Goncharov's (1812-1891) most famous novel, and it has become a classic of Russian Realism. 150 years after its publication, we tend to take its enormous popularity for granted. The first reactions to it, however, were far from overwhelmingly positive. The novel was published in four installments, between January and April 1859, in *Notes of the Fatherland*. It had a long gestation period. It was first conceived in the 1840s and one excerpt, "Oblomov's Dream" ("Son Oblomova"), had been published in *The Contemporary* in 1849. The author put it on hold for the duration of his adventurous trip to Africa and Asia on the frigate Pallada and took it up again and finished it only in 1857, two years after his return to Saint Petersburg. Goncharov kept working on revisions until publication in 1859. As (bad?) luck would have it, however, Goncharov's friend and literary rival, Ivan Turgenev, released *A Nest of Gentlefolk* (*Dvorianskoe gnezdo*) in its entirety in *The Contemporary* in January of the same year. Turgenev's novel was an instant critical success, its triumph comparable only with the first publication of Gogol's *Dead Souls* (*Mertvye dushi*) in 1842. Readers had been waiting for ten years (since "Oblomov's Dream") for Goncharov to publish his novel, but when he finally did, Turgenev stole his proverbial thunder. Critics showed a strong preference for Turgenev's text, which in their view not only opened a window onto the "innermost depths of Russian life," but was also able to permeate this vision with "radiant sympathy" (Annenkov 24-5).[26] His contemporaries accused Goncharov on the other hand, not only of indecisiveness, but also of being "cold" towards his heroes and his subject matter, of not showing enough passion, or sufficient feeling for them (Dobroliubov 308-309, Grigor'ev 5-7, Liatsky 128-132, Protopopov).[27]

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[26] Turgenev would have his chance to divide and disappoint the critics with the publication of *Fathers and Children* three years later.

Like many of his contemporaries, during the decade between 1849 and 1859, Goncharov had been grappling with questions of social change, interiority, and the rise of positivism (Paperno 8-20 and 60-66). His work does not take as strong a position against physiology as the later anti-nihilist novel does (Moser 61-70), nor does it blindly celebrate science and medicine as the radical critics do (Vucinich 1:381). In *Oblomov* we see, perhaps partially due to the long gestation of the novel, a commingling of new, positivistic psychological themes with lingering cultural trends rooted in German Idealism and metaphysics. The overlap of competing discourses, where neither of them dominates over the other, creates the potential for (grotesque) ambiguity. As scholars have observed, Goncharov's writing often posits ontological oppositions –past and future, progress and conservatism, the urban and the provincial– without giving preference to one or the other, or offering a third option (Buckler 163, Grigoryan 102, Sobol 94). The critics' dissatisfaction with Goncharov's "lack of passion" can be at least partially attributed to his lack of a strong viewpoint on political and social questions. After all, it was Dobroliubov's famous article "What is Oblomovism?" (*Chto takoe oblomovshchina?* 1859) that claimed a prominent position for *Oblomov* in Russian literature. Dobroliubov's essay appeared five months after the first installment of the novel, and gave a resolute, and largely positive, reading of the novel. Dobroliubov relieved readers from their confusion over the novel's ambiguities by providing his own ideological views

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[27] When praising the novel, early critics applauded Goncharov's talent in depicting life, his attention to details, his flair for idyll. Yet the same critics decried his lack of sympathy (*nesimpatichnost'*) (Dobroliubov PSS 4:313). Later scholars also tended to be divided in their affective reaction towards the novel's protagonists (Ehre 220).

(Paperno 10), and in this way helped to popularize it (Liatsky 131). In addition to giving a political and cultural reading of the novel, the critic insisted that too many people had cast *Oblomov* aside because of their infatuation with Turgenev's "poetic, more *sympathetic* talent" (Dobroliubov 307, my emphasis). Once again, a perceived lack of affective involvement, which goes beyond the lack of a strong political viewpoint, is perceived main as one of the main flaws of the novel. The absence of "passion" and "anger" in his work is mentioned even in one of the obituaries for Goncharov ("I.A. Goncharov" 131-32).

I argue that the difficulty that readers and critics encountered with Oblomov and attributed to the author's lack of emotional involvement derived instead from the fact that its protagonist, Oblomov, is an emotionally illegible character defined by grotesque affectivity. In this chapter, I consider the construction of Oblomov's affective illegibility as Goncharov's reaction to the rising prestige of physiological psychology in Russian culture in the period leading up to the 1860s, and I maintain that the novel proposes compassion as an alternative to positivistic, rational analysis as a strategy to reframe legibility and approach the other. In this novel, Goncharov advocates for abandoning the attempt to examine and scrutinize other people's interiority in favor instead of accepting them as they are, without being able to fully understand them, or read them. Finally, I argue that, while affective illegibility and grotesque ambiguity might have delayed the novel's immediate success, they ultimately gave it the complexity and spaciousness that gained it its place in the Russian canon.

Oblomov follows the title character through his quite uneventful life:[28] from his coddled childhood among the provincial gentry, to his adulthood marked by sloth, inaction, inability to work, to marry, even to get up from the couch, until his death in a small, humble home on the outskirts of St. Petersburg. We first meet him as he is lying in bed, “с отсутствием всякой определенной идеи, всякой сосредоточенности в чертах лица. Мысль гуляла вольной птицей по лицу, порхала в глазах, садилась на полуотворенные губы, пряталась в складках лба, потом совсем пропадала, и тогда во всем лице теплился ровный свет беспечности” (The absence of any specific idea, of any concentration was reflected in his features. A thought would flitter about his face like a bird on the wing, it would flutter in his eyes, sit on his half-open lips, hide in the wrinkle on his forehead, and then disappear completely, and his whole face would glow once again with the smooth light of unconcern; PSS 4:5).[29] Prominent thinkers of the time, such as Belinsky and Stankevich in the 1830s and 40s, and, later, the young Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov, had been warning their readers about the dangers that emotional indifference posed to a successful and rewarding life (Paperno 63). In the previous chapter, we discussed how indifference, or lack of emotional ties to the outside world, could be taken as a symptom of mental illness. Upon closer examination, however, Oblomov appears to be far from indifferent: he experiences a rich and deep inner emotional life. The main trait of his personality, of his “soul,” is gentleness: “Ни усталость, ни скука не могли ни на минуту согнать с лица мягкость, которая была господствующим и основным выражением не лица только, а всей души; а душа так открыто и ясно светилась в глазах, в улыбке, в каждом движении головы, рук” (Neither fatigue, nor boredom could dispel the gentleness from his face even for a minute. This gentleness was the driving and foundational expression not only of his face, but of his whole soul. His soul that shone so openly and clearly through his eyes, his smile; that was visible in every movement of his head, of his hands; PSS 4, 5). We see here a contradiction: Oblomov's exterior is smoothed out by unconcern (*bespechnost'*), yet his eyes and smile are illuminated by the power of his soul shining through. In this contradiction lies his affective illegibility. Throughout the novel, we are given access to the entirety of Oblomov's "gentle soul," and we see him experience an extraordinarily wide array of feelings: he is in love, heartbroken, filled with righteous indignation, shame, anxiety, despair, anguish, envy, joy, hope. His behavior, however, does not reflect his tumultuous interiority and is characterized instead by apathy and suspended action. His apathy is not a consequence of indifference or lack of feeling, but rather of Oblomov's grotesque affective system.

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[28] I understand the term "event" within a narrative plot as Yuri Lotman describes it in *The Structure of the Artistic Text* (*Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta*, 232-6), as a transgression of the norm, something that occurred but might have not occurred, something that is worth reporting or noting.

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[29] Unless otherwise noted, references to Goncharov’s texts come from the following edition, cited in the text as PSS: I.A. Goncharov. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v dvadtsati tomakh.* 20 vols. (Nauka, 1997–). The text of *Oblomov* appears in vol. 4 (PSS 4). All translations from the Russian are mine.

His affective system is characterized by inadequacy. Just as his inadequacy prevents him from working in an office, being in society, making a good marriage, being a landowner, etc., it also prevents him from translating his feelings into action in the world. There is a discrepancy not only between what comes towards him from outside and his feeling (like the patients of the case studies in Chapter One, he perceives the world differently, *inache*), but also between his feelings and what he in turn puts out into the world. For example, in his daydreams he imagines himself as the hero of many battles (PSS 4:65-7), but when he meets with Olga in a park without a chaperone, he is terrified (PSS 4:328-34). These episodes might at first appear to be purely comical. Our hero, however, cannot be reduced to a farcical character. His fear is not laughable cowardice; it is life-threatening anxiety. His imagined courage is not a narcissistic boast, but an example of true goodness (Ehre 160). This discrepancy caused by inadequacy (the "out-of-place" of the grotesque) is at the core of Oblomov's illegibility.

In addition to Oblomov's grotesque affectivity, the novel is permeated by grotesque elements, both in the world and in the other characters. In the following, I will argue that it is precisely such a grotesque, malleable world, a world towards which the author does not seem to take a strong position, which allows for a character such as Oblomov to gain "roundness" and for Goncharov to reframe the parameters of character legibility. Unfortunately, in such a world, Stolz, whom Goncharov had imagined to be the positive hero of the story, is condemned to fall flat. With a German father and a Russian mother, Andrei Stolz was supposed to represent the best of two worlds: he was to exemplify the new, active, entrepreneurial man, the kind of individual who can move the Russian Empire forward into modernity (Bojanowska 18-9). He does not experience contradictory or inadequate feelings; he is a fully realized individual who by the end of the novel harmoniously combines rationality, emotional life, and a successful professional career. Though divided in other ways, *Oblomov* critics have been generally unified in disliking poor Stolz. Over the years, he has been called flat, boring, and unconvincing (Dobroliubov 340-41, Tseitlin 175, Ehre 219). In Oblomov's grotesque world, where characters are made round by the many contradictions within their inner lives, which make them affectively illegible and true to life, Stolz, who is defined by harmony, seems to be too artificial to be believable. In the following, I will analyze the grotesque world that makes Oblomov possible and Stolz unlikely. The grotesque world tinges Oblomov's origin story in far from idyllic tones and medicalizes his adult life. Finally, I will examine the role that compassion plays in the novel to reframe legibility of character.

A Grotesque World

In *Oblomov,* literature does reflect the depths of the individual's inner life, but not with scientific clarity and precision. Despite the meticulous examination of Oblomov's feelings, we are still uncertain regarding why he might feel a certain way or how a certain feeling might impact his actions. Goncharov rejects the position, encouraged by the radical critics, that literature should diagnose society or individuals. Oblomov is not the subject of an anthropological study in "Oblomovism," as Dobroliubov would make him out to be. Instead, he is an illegible, grotesque character, who inhabits an illegible, grotesque world.

In mid-nineteenth century Russia, the popularity of physiognomy inadvertently encouraged the literalization of commonplace figures of speech in scientific discourse. While classical physiognomy had been around since the Middle Ages as a scientific and aesthetic discussion of the visual representation of emotions and humors, it was the Swiss pastor Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801) who revolutionized it (Gilman 62). His idea that an exact relationship exists between body and soul, that is, that a person's interiority is reflected or manifests in their exteriority, introduced in 1772 and popularized between 1775 and 1778, was adopted by several other scholars and soon dominated European thought (Gilman 64). By the mid-nineteenth century it was widely accepted in Russian society as well and employed in Realist prose (Merten 47). Claiming that a certain asymmetrical skull shape or facial feature is a *direct reflection* of an interior, psychological flaw has the potential on one hand for grotesque paradox and distortion, and on the other, to be taken in a more sinister direction, such as towards phrenologic or even eugenic views.

In *Oblomov,* we see the physiognomic idea of correspondence between body and soul used in an innocuous, comical, and potentially grotesque way. For example, in Part I the external appearance of Oblomov's visitors is a reflection of their personality. The most glaring case is Tarant'ev, the novel's villain, a low-level bureaucrat and crook. "Высокий, объемистый в плечах и во всем туловище, с крупными чертами лица, с большой головой, с крепкой, коротенькой шеей, с большими навыкате глазами, толстогубый" (He was tall, bulky in the shoulders and torso, with heavy facial features, a big head, a short neck, bulging eyes, and fat lips; PSS 4: 37). In other words, he looks like a big, broad, repulsive toad. His evil and unscrupulous personality, which emerges as he designs a fraud that reduces Oblomov to indigence, is in perfect agreement with his looks. The metaphor of a toad –an animal classically associated with evil– is further reinforced by the Russian phrase "его жаба душит" (literally, a toad is strangling him) to indicate exceptional envy, especially when coveting money or material goods. Tarant'ev is so much like a vicious, covetous toad that he literally becomes one in his appearance too. This metaphorical transformation is characterized by grotesque distortion and exaggeration, and our villain appears at once comical and repulsive.

Metonymy and metaphor are tinged with grotesque hybridity for many of the secondary characters. Zakhar is repeatedly compared to an animal –most often a dog and sometimes a cat. When he starts crying, incidentally because his master calls him a "snake," it sounds "как будто десятка два жуков влетели и зажужжали в комнате" (as if two dozen beetles entered the room and all started buzzing; PSS 4, 93). In Vyborg, while everyone else lives in the house, Zakhar lives in his own "nest" (PSS 4: 470). He never achieves full humanity: often he appears as disembodied, with huge, fuzzy whiskers, and when he stands in front of a dusty mirror he only sees "дико, исподлобья смотрел на него, как из тумана, собственный его же угрюмый и некрасивый лик" (as if through a fog, his own sullen and ugly face that looked back at him wildly from under his brows; PSS 4, 89). Zakhar's animality elicits not only laughter and repulsion, but also pity and compassion in those closest to him, that is, Oblomov and Stolz. Ivan Matveevich, the landlady's brother and Tarant'ev's partner in crime, on the other hand, displays tufts of hair on his temples that look like dog ears and reveal his animalistic nature. His most human feature, his hands, are repulsive and shameful. He is always trying to hide them, "может быть, оттого, что пальцы были толстоваты, красноваты и немного тряслись и ему не без причины казалось не совсем приличным выставлять их часто напоказ” (maybe because his fingers were fat, red, and a little shaky, and he thought it, not without reason, a bit indecent to show them too often; PSS 4, 307). The shame that Ivan Matveevich feels about his fingers creates uneasiness in the reader and turns this detail from comical to grotesque.

Finally, Agafia Matveevna, Oblomov’s landlady and future wife, also has a remarkable and uncanny appearance. The first two times she is mentioned, she is faceless, because Oblomov only notices her naked elbows and neck. These two naked body parts will become the metonymical symbol of her carnality and of our hero’s physical attraction to her. On the contrary, Oblomov never seems to notice his other love interest, Olga’s, body. Her body’s only remarkable features are its harmonious (idealized) proportions: “Несколько высокому росту строго отвечала величина головы, величине головы — овал и размеры лица; всё это в свою очередь гармонировало с плечами, плечи — с станом...” (Her somewhat tall stature corresponded perfectly with the size of her head; the size of her head to the shape and size of her face; all of this, in turn, was in harmony with her shoulders; her shoulders with her torso…; PSS 4, 192). Olga’s figure is all about rationally distributed proportions. It reads like the description of a mannequin or a drawing by Leonardo. While his “heart” and “nerves” flutter when he looks at Olga,[30] Oblomov looks at the landlady “с таким же удовольствием, с каким утром смотрел на горячую ватрушку” (with the same enjoyment with which he looked at a warm pastry that morning; PSS 4, 336). The landlady’s carnal sensuality, however, lacks the ideal, harmonious beauty that characterizes Olga. Agafia Matveevna's face, swollen and white, and her hands, coarse and covered in blue veins, are slightly repulsive:

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[30] Incidentally the word “нервы” (nerves) is another example of the incorporation of new medical language in *Oblomov*. The use of this word in the novel is different from how Goncharov used it in his first novel *An Ordinary Story* (*Obyknovennaia istoriia*), published in 1847. “Nerves” then were considered with ironic distance, almost as Romantic posturing (Sobol 109). In *Oblomov* we see them treated unironically as a medical problem that affects Olga.

> Она была очень бела и полна в лице, так что румянец, кажется, не мог пробиться сквозь щеки. Бровей у нее почти совсем не было, а были на их местах две немного будто припухлые, лоснящиеся полосы с редкими светлыми волосами. Глаза серовато-простодушные, как и всё выражение лица; руки белые, но жесткие, с выступившими наружу крупными узлами синих жил.
>
> Her face was very white and round, so that a blush, it seemed, could not penetrate through her cheeks. She had almost no eyebrows, and in their place were two slightly swollen, glossy stripes with sparse blond hair. Her eyes were gray and innocent, as was her whole facial expression; her hands were white, but coarse, with large nodes of blue veins protruding outward. (PSS 4: 296-97)

While Olga has beautiful eyebrows that match her intelligence and refinement, Agafia Matveevna has swollen, shiny strips of sparse blond hair in place of eyebrows and a vacuous expression. The landlady's simple-heartedness and the fact that, in Oblomov's eyes, she has almost no intellect, translate in her appearance as having almost no eyebrows. In their place, there are two slightly repulsive hairy caterpillars, which reflect an element of shame in Oblomov's attraction to her. It is her intense physicality that makes her grotesque, especially when she is compared with Olga, who is pure mind, barely embodied in mannequin form. The landlady is, most of all, a concrete, confusing body, which is consistent with the grotesque affinity for bizarre physicality (Thomson 8-9). She is the object of carnal desire instead of idealized love.

An Affectively Grotesque World

The characters we examined as aesthetically grotesque, Zakhar, the landlady, Ivan Matveevich, etc., are characterized by dismemberment and hybridization, by the mixing of human with animal, animate with inanimate. Because of the physiognomic link between outside and inside, however, their grotesque exteriority is often mirrored by grotesque interiority, or affectivity. For example, Stolz Senior has big, coarse, red hands, which repel Stolz's mother, while at the same time they bear witness to an admirable life of hard work. These hands are an outer expression of Stolz Sr.'s materialistic, profit oriented, German *Bürger* mindset, which lacks the adequate affective engagement expected in the Russian world he inhabits. When Andrei leaves the family home to go into the world, his father does not feel the expected sorrow and does not hug his son goodbye. The people around them who are witnessing the scene are scandalized. A (Russian) woman steps in to "volunteer" the missing feeling: she gives Andrei an embrace and some kind words, with the pathos that is appropriate for the situation. Stolz Sr.'s pragmatism is found to be reproachable in its indifference (lack of feeling). At the same time, the narrator is full of admiration for the way in which Stolz Sr. rears his son, a way that is the opposite from the Oblomovs' approach. The Oblomovs cried abundantly when their son left the family home and showed the appropriate emotions at his departure, but they did not prepare their son to be in the world. The narrator expresses clear disdain for their educational methods. It is his father's influence that allows Stolz to be successful in the world. The lack of (Russian) tenderness and his (German) pragmatism make Stolz's father an affectively ambiguous character in the feelings he elicits in the other characters and the narrator, just like his coarse red hands can be admired (they represent hard work) or be found repulsive.

Another affectively as well as aesthetically grotesque character is Zakhar. On one hand, he is a classic type of the farcically foolish servant, yet there is something extremely touching about him. Both Oblomov and the narrator find it hard to reconcile the desire to laugh at him, be disgusted by him, or feel pity for him. First, we hear about his disgusting grey frock coat that he has been wearing without a good wash since time immemorial. Immediately, however, we are also told that this coat is so much more than a dirty piece of cloth: it reminds Zakhar of the splendid bygone times at Oblomovka. Nostalgia and pathos for Zakhar always go hand in hand with his wildness, his filth, and his bestial nature. Like his master, he is constantly filled with emotions: indignation, sorrow, elation, disgust, love. For example, even though he doesn't admit it, he loves Oblomovka, and Oblomov, above all else, with a pathetic amount of emotion: "Малейшего повода довольно было, чтоб вызвать это чувство из глубины души Захара и заставить его смотреть с благоговением на барина, иногда даже удариться, от умиления, в слезы" (The smallest pretext was enough to arouse this feeling from the depths of Zakhar's soul and make him look with reverence at his master, and sometimes even burst into tears, because he was so deeply moved; PSS 4: 72). But, unlike Oblomov, Zakhar harbors feelings that are not entirely human, they are always mixed with the bestial: "Захар любил Обломовку, как кошка свой чердак, лошадь — стойло, собака — конуру, в которой родилась и выросла" (Zakhar loved Oblomovka, as a cat loves its attic, a horse its stable, a dog the kennel where it was born and raised; ibid). Towards the end of the novel, after Oblomov's death, he becomes a sad, pitiful figure, reduced to indigence and living on the streets as a beggar. This pathetic fate is an invitation to compassion and contributes to placing Zakhar's character outside of the type of farcical servant. The fact that even the figure of the buffoonish servant hides more in himself than what one would presume and that his fate demands compassion rather than laughter is a testament to Goncharov's main claims in the novel: the world and others are grotesque, illegible things that are not open for us to read. We need to approach others with compassion rather than deriding them.

Oblomov's Dream: An Ill Idyll

The mixing of psychopathological notions and Romantic tropes contributes to the complexity and ambiguity of *Oblomov* and its eponymous protagonist. Despite the Realist premise of a backstory offering clarity and access into a character's interiority, we are not better able to read Oblomov after Oblomov's dream than we were before. This is one way in which the novel pushes against the popular idea that a complete understanding of the individual and therefore society could be achieved through developments in modern medicine and psychiatry (Vucinich 2:23). "Oblomov's Dream" gives us the hero's origin story. It is supposed to function as an illuminating excursus on the psychological processes that created adult Oblomov. The effect of this section, however, turns out to be not as clarifying as one might have hoped. What at first appears to be an uncomplicated depiction of a pastoral idyll in the form of memories of a childhood spent on a provincial estate is rendered more complex and ambiguous by the quasi-medical and psychological exploration of Oblomov's rearing and its consequences on his adult apathy and ineptitude, what is encapsulated in the now proverbial term "обломовщина" (Oblomovism). This term delighted the radical critic Dobroliubov, who, like other young critics, embraced the physiological turn, and rejected biological determinism. Thus, he firmly believed that individuals are a product of their environment (Vucinich 2:14-21; Merten 67). Dobroliubov underlined the fact that, for Oblomov, "Его лень и апатия есть создание воспитания и окружающих обстоятельств. Главное здесь не Обломов, а обломовщина" (His indolence and apathy are the result of upbringing and environment. The crux here is not Oblomov, but Oblomovism; 321). The environmental idea allowed the critic to view the novel as a takedown of a societal malaise - Oblomovism - rather than as the portrait of a complex, multifaceted individual, Oblomov. But the psychological and medical analysis of Oblomov's childhood does not serve a polemical purpose (even though we can assume that Goncharov did subscribe to some of the theories he puts forward in this section). The mixing of Romanticism and medicalization, idyll and illness, childhood and adulthood, works on the narrative level to create a (grotesque) opening for contradiction. It ensures the creation of a world and a character that are complex and illegible, rather than providing an easy diagnosis of "Oblomovism" to describe a set list of societal problems that can be fixed thanks to physiological psychology.

In "Oblomov's Dream" we see the hybrid combination of two worlds: the idyllic world of Oblomovka and the medicalized world of the modern capital. These two worlds are bound to come in conflict with each other, especially in the figures of Oblomov and his servant Zakhar, who are trapped between them. An example of how medical language complicates the idyll is the instance of the post-lunch rest hour. At Oblomovka, after lunch everybody falls asleep. Initially, this habit is described in a fairytale-like language: "Это был какой-то всепоглощающий, ничем непобедимый сон, истинное подобие смерти" (It was a kind of all-consuming, unconquerable sleep, the true likeness of death; PSS 4, 111). Medical language, however, soon replaces the fairytale expressions. The nanny is supposed to stay awake and watch the boy while the other adults sleep. Unfortunately, "она тоже *заражалась* этой господствовавшей в Обломовке *повальной болезнью*" (she also became *infected* with this *epidemic illness* ruling over Oblomovka). She tries to warn the child not to get into trouble as she starts to feel the "симптомы приближавшейся *заразы*" (symptoms of the approaching *contagion;* PSS 4, 112, my emphasis). She eventually succumbs and falls asleep leaving the child alone. Everyone's greatest fear can then come true: young Oblomov is free to get into harm's way. The sleepy lifestyle at Oblomovka is ironically compared to an epidemic. While the young boy does not actually come into any serious harm, the contagion comes back later in our hero's adult life as a serious threat to his health. The doctors, Olga, Stolz, and even Agafia Matveevna tell Oblomov that sleeping after lunch has a direct negative impact on his health. But our hero, like his childhood nanny, is unable to resist the contagion and regularly falls asleep, against his best interest. The medicalization of a rather innocuous activity, a postprandial nap, moves it from an idyllic, timeless reality to a modern temporality where it does not belong, and renders it sinister.

A similar example is the hidden threat to Oblomov's psychological wellbeing posited by his nanny's fairytales. As a child, "сказка у него смешалась с жизнью" (the fairy tales became confused with real life). Oblomov had a hyperactive imagination, and he merged the world of reality with that of fantasy. As an adult "он бессознательно грустит подчас, зачем сказка не жизнь, а жизнь не сказка" (he unconsciously felt sad at times that fairy tales are not real life, and life is not a tale; PSS 4: 116). As an adult he is unable to separate reality from fantasy, dreams from real life: he is stuck between them. Not only real events, therefore, but also imagined ones can be traumatic if they get confused with real life. While little Ilia is listening to his nanny's fairytales "боязнь и тоска засели надолго, может быть навсегда, в душу" (dread and anguish got lodged into the boy's soul for a long time, perhaps forever; PSS 4: 118-19). In the pre-Freudian and pre-trauma theory period of psychiatry it was believed that strong feelings could re-emerge accompanied by pathological mental symptoms (Merten 135). In this case, the imaginary terrors do emerge for Oblomov pathologically later in life. Even when Oblomov as an adult has stopped believing in ghosts and wood goblins, the narrator tells us, "остается какой-то осадок страха и безотчетной тоски" (a lingering fear and an unaccountable melancholia remain; PSS 4: 119). Towards the end of his life melancholia gives way to delirium: the monotonous, interminable winter evenings at Oblomovka, spent with the same people, mostly in silence –which Oblomov as a child had experienced in a half-awake and half-asleep state– come back to haunt our hero as an adult not as a happy memory, but as a frightening hallucination (PSS 4: 479-80). Just as the innocuous nap after lunch becomes a serious threat to Oblomov's health when it is analyzed from a medical point of view, so a joyful and tender moment such as hearing fairytales before bed becomes a daunting psychological threat. The morphing of harmless, if funny, elements into medical threats expands the narrative and generic space of Oblomovka: rather than being a pastoral idyll, it contains contradictions. The good, fairy-tale-like memories and the bad education are inextricably tied together, both at Oblomovka and in Oblomov.

Oblomovka is initially presented as a place of perfect tranquility, where "Никто… не видал… никаких страшных небесных знамений, ни шаров огненных, ни внезапной темноты; не водится там ядовитых гадов; саранча не залетает туда; нет ни львов рыкающих, ни тигров ревущих, ни даже медведей и волков, потому что нет лесов" (No one ever saw any terrible signs from the heavens, no balls of fire, no sudden darkness; no poisonous reptiles are found here; locusts do not reach this place; there are no roaring lions, no roaring tigers, not even bears and wolves, because there are no forests; PSS 4: 101). Oblomovka, however, hides an ill idyll: it is a space that seems fairy tale like but where hidden psycho-developmental and medical dangers hide. This doubling once again reappears in Oblomov's adult life. Oblomov claims that during the winter there are wolves roaming around Vyborg (PSS 4: 45). Wolves were precisely the creatures that supposedly were to be found in the ditch where young Oblomov was prohibited from going, and where he would get to go when his nanny fell asleep. By the end of his life, he is living out the modest idyll he imagined in Vyborg rather than Oblomovka, where the scary wolves of his childhood roam but none of the poetry is left.

An Illegible Protagonist

Aesthetically, adult Oblomov is marked by grotesque hybridity, fragmentation, and distortion. What was analyzed quasi-scientifically in “Oblomov’s Dream” is expressed using rhetorical, grotesque devices in Oblomov’s adult life. From the beginning of the narrative, the reader is confronted by someone who is not sick or sleeping but spends his entire day in bed, in a room full of dust and cobwebs, plagued by mice, lice and cockroaches. Surely, this is not a *barin* (gentleman), as the novel claims.[31] It is not even a man, as Oblomov defies the norms of masculinity of his time (Merten 10). His body is tender and soft, the opposite of Stolz’s strong, muscular body, all bones, muscles, and nerves. It is Olga who assumes the role of the man in their relationship, while Oblomov is “какая-то Галатея, с которой ей самой приходилось быть Пигмалионом” (some sort of Galatea, to whom she had to be Pygmalion; PSS 4, 236). As a matter of fact, he might not even be a person, but an inanimate object. In the opening page of the novel, when Oblomov is first described, we learn that “С лица беспечность переходила в позы всего тела, даже в складки шлафрока” (The apathy extended from his face to his whole bodily posture, and even to the folds of his dressing gown; PSS 4: 5). As soon as we see him, his apathy allows him to merge with the objects around him. As a matter of fact, he blends in so well that he disappears: “Если б не эта тарелка, да не прислоненная к постели только что выкуренная трубка, или не сам хозяин, лежащий на ней, то можно было бы подумать, что тут никто не живет, — так всё запылилось, полиняло и вообще лишено было живых следов человеческого присутствия” (If it hadn’t been for a plate, a pipe, just smoked, leaning against the bed, or its owner lying on it, one could think that no one lived here, so dusty, faded and completely devoid of living traces of human presence everything was; PSS 4: 6). The few things that reveal the presence of a human in this room are objects: a plate, a pipe, a bed. Oblomov is ironically equated with these mundane objects in how little influence he exerts on the environment around him. His inaction, or suspended action, brings him closer to an object.

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[31] For a discussion of Oblomov’s social identity as a nobleman see Grigoryan 99-122.

Akin to being on the threshold between animacy and inanimacy, he is also stuck between life and death. Olga and Stolz make several attempts to pull Oblomov out of this liminal space, but they inevitably fail. Oblomov lies on the couch “мертвой колодой” (like a dead log; PSS 4, 319), Olga wants to check on Oblomov, but she is afraid of seeing him “убитого, мертвого” (killed, dead; PSS 4: 467)! In other words, not ready for the change she would like to inspire in him. After they get married, Stolz goes to visit his friend partially to fulfill Olga’s wish: “я обещал откапывать тебя из могилы... (I promised [her] to exhume you from the grave…; PSS 4, 390). Oblomov dreams of life, getting married, moving back to Oblomovka, etc., but he also dreams of death. To one of Stolz’s reproaches of being “dead” Oblomov replies in vexation: “- Ах, жизнь!- сказал он. -Что жизнь? - Трогает, нет покоя! Лег бы и заснул... навсегда... (– Ah, life! – he replied. – What about it? – It keeps bothering you, there is no peace! I would almost like to lie down and fall asleep… forever…; PSS 4, 391). Peace and life for Oblomov seem to be incompatible, he is forever unable to reconcile the opposing aspects of his character and his life. Our hero is half asleep, half awake; half human, half object; half man, half woman; half alive, half dead; half inner, half outer. Oblomov’s body – permanently supine, flaccid, gender non-conforming, and undead – is a grotesque distortion of a healthy, masculine, human body. Even spatially, he cannot exist in a definite place, neither at Oblomovka nor in St. Petersburg. His romance with Olga happens outside the city, at the dacha. Afterwards, he ends up in Vyborg, at the outskirts of St. Petersburg: a liminal place where he can exist in his half-death/half-life sphere.[32] These opposing categories give Oblomov a composite, hybrid nature, which is one defining characteristic of the grotesque (Thomson 11).

From an affective point of view, we are never sure of what Oblomov is feeling: he is affectively illegible. His indifference is just a veneer of a rich, if grotesque, emotional life. Oblomov's vehement passions express themselves mainly in his inner life, or in his dreams (Ehre 160). When they do come to the surface, his emotions often seem inadequate to the situation. For example, when they receive the notice that they are being evicted from their apartment on Gorokhovaia street, in the center of Saint Petersburg, Zakhar tries to convince his master that moving to a different place would not be impossible for them. He makes the mistake of saying: "Я думал, что другие, мол, не хуже нас, да переезжают, так и нам можно..." (I thought that others, you know, not worse than us, well, they move… so we could as well…; PSS 4, 88). Oblomov is incredibly offended, falls into a frenzy, cannot calm down, and finally decides to call back Zakhar to give him a speech and "дать почувствовать ему всю гнусность его поступка." (have him feel the true vileness of his action; ibid). The confrontation that follows between the two is extraordinarily full of pathos, a true burst of emotional activity after eighty pages of eerie quiet. Oblomov's reaction is so exaggerated that we are inclined to laugh at it, and the dialogue between him and Zakhar does present some purely comical elements. At the same time, however, we understand that this is a very serious moment for our hero, a moment of confrontation between himself and the world, something he fears deeply. This sudden and disproportionate emotional outburst is an example of Oblomov's affective inadequacy: he experiences the world differently and he expresses his inner feelings differently, without following logic, proportions, or appropriateness.

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[32] For a discussion of space and geography in *Oblomov* see Lounsbery 43-50.

Oblomov's illegibility does not come from a lack of access to his inner life. The narrator gives the reader complete access to Oblomov's thoughts and feelings. His own feelings about himself and his life, however, are inconsistent. He wavers between regarding his life and himself with satisfaction and despair. In Part One, he compares his lazy lifestyle with one of his visitor's career-oriented habits. He feels contentedness and pride for his choices. "Он испытал чувство мирной радости, что он с девяти до трех, с восьми до девяти может пробыть у себя на диване, и гордился, …что есть простор его чувствам, воображению" (He experienced a feeling of pacific pleasure that he could be home, on his couch, from nine to three and then from eight to nine. He felt proud… that he had plenty of space for his feelings, for his imagination; PPS 4: 25). A few hours later, however, after he reprimanded Zakhar for comparing him to "others," he starts thinking about it more. A different idea about "others," opposite to what he told Zakhar, starts forming in his mind. "Как страшно стало ему, когда вдруг в душе его возникло живое и ясное представление о человеческой судьбе и назначении, и когда мелькнула параллель между этим назначением и собственной его жизнью, когда в голове просыпались, …как птицы, пробужденные внезапным лучом солнца в дремлющей развалине, разные жизненные вопросы" (How terrible he started to feel, when suddenly a vivid and clear idea of human destiny and purpose arose in his soul; and when he caught a glimpse of a parallel between this purpose and his own life, when in his head various questions about life rose up, like birds awakened by a sudden ray of sunshine in a dormant ruin; PSS 4, 96). The same ambivalence remains in Part Four, during Stolz's last visit to him in Vyborg. At this point, he has given up his love for Olga and the idea of moving back to Oblomovka, he is married to Agafia Matveevna, and they have a little boy. Oblomov has become "естественным отражением и выражением того покоя, довольства и безмятежной тишины" (a true reflection and expression of calm, satisfaction, and serene peace). He has decided that “ему некуда больше идти, нечего искать, что идеал его жизни осуществился” (he has nowhere to go anymore, nothing to search for, his ideal is realized; PSS 4, 473). At the same time, he feels anguish, he can’t sleep, “иногда плачет холодными слезами безнадежности по светлом, навсегда угаснувшем идеале жизни, как плачут по дорогом усопшем, с горьким чувством сознания, что недовольно сделали для него при жизни” (at times he cries cold tears of hopelessness for a bright ideal that is gone forever, he cries like people cry for the dear departed, with the bitter awareness that they didn’t do enough for the deceased while he was alive; PSS 4, 474). This ambivalence is the other main trait, which, with inadequacy, makes Oblomov illegible and trapped in suspended action.

If it’s impossible to read Oblomov, how do the other characters in the novel feel about him? Several characters, Stolz, Olga, Agafia Matveevna, love him, others are repelled by him, or consider him insignificant enough to not deserve an emotional reaction. In good society, for example, Oblomov is ridiculous and contemptible. Oblomov overhears a dialogue between two dandies at the opera:

> — Что это за господин был сейчас в ложе у Ильинских? — спросил один у другого.
>
> — Это Обломов какой-то, — небрежно отвечал другой.
>
> — Что это за Обломов?
>
> — Это... помещик, друг Штольца.
>
> — А! — значительно произнес другой. — Друг Штольца. Что ж он тут делает?
>
> — Dieu sait! — отвечал другой, и все разошлись по местам.
>
> – Who was that gentleman in the Ilinski’s box? one asked the other.
>
> – A certain “Oblomov,” – offhandedly replied the other.
>
> – Who is this “Oblomov”?

– He’s… a landowner, a friend of Stolz.

– Ah! –said the other meaningfully– A friend of Stolz. What is he ever doing there?

– *Dieu sait*! replied the other, and everyone went back to their seats. (PPS 4: 317)

In this instance, we see Oblomov perceived with contempt, rather than repulsion. “[U]nlike the disgusting, which is perceived as dangerous and contaminating, …the object of Hobbesian contempt, …is relatively harmless, [it] is perceived as inferior in a manner that allows it to be dismissed or ignored” (Ngai 336). Contempt allows them to dismiss the question of what is Oblomov doing there with Olga. This attitude is appealing because it relieves them from caring enough to try to understand him. Other characters, however, find his inadequacy harder to ignore. Tarant’ev and Alekseei Matveeich find him ridiculous, absolutely repellent in his ineptitude. He was born rich and privileged, unlike them, yet he is unable to do anything with his resources. After congratulating each other for duping such a foolish man Aleksei Mateevich concludes: “Разве умеет свои выгоды соблюсти? Корова, сущая корова: ее хоть ударь, хоть обними — всё ухмыляется, как лошадь на овес” (Do you think he is able to keep track of his money? A cow, an utter cow: whether you hit it, or hug it – he still smiles contentedly like a horse on oats; PSS 4: 364). In another grotesque debasement Oblomov is considered a beast, less than human. In their case, their repulsion and ridicule for Oblomov’s intolerably upsetting way of managing his money function as a justification for their malevolent schemes.

Stolz and Olga experience a similar urgency in their feelings towards Oblomov, even though it originates in their love for him rather than in repulsion. They both feel that his state of suspended action is unbearable and requires an immediate change. Stolz and Olga expend a significant amount of time and energy trying to squash our hero’s contentedness with the status quo. The part of him that feels proud of his imagination and comfortable with his modest utopia is insufferable to them. Stolz spends every visit to Oblomov trying to shake him out of his unacceptable lifestyle. In the same way, when Stolz first introduces Oblomov and Olga, it is our hero's apathy that urges Olga to sing "Casta Diva" with such passion: "Штольц сказал про него, что он апатичен, что ничто его не занимает, что всё угасло в нем... Вот ей и захотелось посмотреть, всё ли угасло, и она пела, пела... как никогда..." (Stolz had said about [Oblomov] that he was an apathetic man, that nothing engaged him, the spark inside him had died… Now she felt the urge to test whether his spark had truly died, and she sang and sang… like she had never sung before; PSS 4, 207).[33] This performance does awaken new emotions in Oblomov and it becomes the origin of their love. Theirs, however, is only a temporary engagement, and after an intense summer romance, as fall and winter approach, their love withers. Even after their love passes, Olga's feelings of urgency to "help" Oblomov out of Oblomovism remain. These efforts for both Stolz and Olga stem from the great love they feel for our hero, as they recognize his fundamental goodness. Their love notwithstanding, they still find our hero intolerable, upsetting. They both desperately try to read him in order to find the key to change him. While he is allegedly an open book, they cannot understand his way of being, and he remains illegible for them until the end. Their approach to him, however, filled with zeal but devoid of compassion, was always doomed to fail.

Reframing Character Legibility

While it might be impossible to read Oblomov, it is possible, and preferable, to simply feel compassion towards him. When Oblomov is first introduced, the narrator imagines someone examining Oblomov and trying to form an opinion of him. A substantial difference between an indifferent and a sympathetic observer emerges: “поверхностно наблюдательный, *холодный* человек, взглянув мимоходом на Обломова, сказал бы: «Добряк должен быть, простота!» Человек поглубже и *посимпатичнее*, долго вглядываясь в лицо его, отошел бы в приятном раздумье, с улыбкой” (a superficial observer, a *cold* person, looking at Oblomov in passing would say, “He must be a good soul, but a simpleton!” But if someone were to contemplate his face for a while more deeply and *sympathetically*, they would walk away in a pleasant mood, with a smile; PSS 4: 5, my emphasis). Only the latter will understand who our hero truly is. In other words, a crucial aspect of appreciating Oblomov and his ambiguity is using compassion, rather than rationality.

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[33] Julie Buckler analyzes the connections between opera and the novel in *Oblomov* and in particular the significance of Olga singing *Casta Diva* in her book *The Literary Lorgnette* (157-163).

Another significant episode takes place when Zakhar is trying to convince Oblomov to leave his apartment on Gorokhovaia Street for a few hours so that he would have time to clean. The lackey suggests, among other things, “Вон, говорят, какое-то неслыханное чудовище привезли: его бы поглядели” (They are saying that a never-heard-of-before monster has been brought to town: why not go have a look at it; PSS 4: 86). We can read this as a subtle reference to the same kind of insensitive voyeurism that the radical critics, who venerated science and medicine for their ability to dissect and explain, encouraged. Stories of “monsters” abounded in the journals and could be read side by side with the physiological sketches that were popular with the Natural School especially in the 1840s. We can see Goncharov’s exhortations to sympathy as a corrective to the cult of objectivity that these pieces shared, and which deprived their subjects of their humanity. Oblomov gives a passionate speech against the Natural School’s cynical approach to their subject matter to the scribbler Penkin, who had come to pay him a visit.[34] He criticizes the dehumanizing interest that these writers have in the more vulnerable elements of society, in the "fallen people:" "— Извергнуть из гражданской среды! — вдруг заговорил вдохновенно Обломов ... — Это значит забыть, …что он испорченный человек, но всё человек же, то есть вы сами. Извергнуть! А как вы извергнете его из круга человечества, из лона природы, из милосердия Божия? — почти крикнул он с пылающими глазами" (–Expel them from the social environment!– said Oblomov, suddenly inspired ... –This would mean forgetting that … they might be a corrupted person, but all the same they are a person, that is to say, they are you. Expel them! But how can you cast them out of humanity, out of nature, out of God's mercy?– He almost shouted, his eyes ablaze; PSS 4: 28).[35] Not only should we feel compassion, rather than contempt or repulsion, for any "fallen person," Oblomov declares, we should also recognize some of ourselves in them. Rather than scrutinizing them, we should remember our shared humanity, nature, and soul.

At the end of the novel this invitation to compassion is made explicit one more time. Goncharov the writer makes an appearance in the story as a character. We find him strolling around Vyborg with Stolz. The two friends run into some beggars. The fictional Goncharov wonders what paths of life may reduce someone to such abject poverty. Stolz suggests that they question one of them about it. They come upon none other than Zakhar, who has experienced a downfall after Oblomov's death. This encounter prompts Stolz to tell Oblomov's story and fictional Goncharov to write it (PSS 4: 490-1). We now realize, retrospectively, that we have been reading the story of a "fallen person" all along. If we remember the previous exhortations, we should not only feel compassion, but also recognize that there is some Oblomov in all of us. Our compassion for Oblomov will help us feel closer to him, without needing to understand him. His contradictions make Oblomov who he is, and he will remain inscrutable. It appears that we should take Agafia Matveevna's position, the only one who doesn't care about "Oblomovism," only about Oblomov. She loves him and appreciates what he brings into her life, without expecting him to be different.

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[34] This polemic might have seemed a bit dated to Goncharov's readers in 1859, even though it was very current in the 1840s when the novel was first conceived. An analogous polemical stab at the physiological sketches can be found, for example, in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Poor Folk* (*Bednye liudi*), which was published in 1846.

[35] This monologue reminds us of Zosima's message of inclusion in *The Brothers Karamazov.*

The Problem with Stolz

The novel creates a grotesque world where a grotesque hero demands our sympathy and compassion despite his shortcomings. The author, however, also offers us a positive hero, a prototype for the new Russian man, a figure that people could aspire to: Andrei Stolz. He represents the balance among emotions, rationality and will. Goncharov imagines the "new man" as it was envisioned by the intellectuals of the 1830s and 40s, who in turn were inspired by the Saint-Simonians and Fourier (Paperno 69). We have access to Stolz's past, his thoughts, his motivations, and his emotions. The perfect harmony of all aspects of his inner and outer life makes this character accessible and easy to understand. He is not laughable, nor frightening, nor pitiful. The only problem is that Stolz, as a character, falls completely flat.

Stolz exists outside the novel's grotesque affective and aesthetic system. As Dobroliubov put it "мы не понимаем, как мог Штольц в своей деятельности успокоиться от всех стремлений и потребностей, которые одолевали даже Обломова, как мог он удовлетвориться своим положением, успокоиться на своем одиноком, отдельном, исключительном счастье..." (we don't understand how Stolz, with all his energy, not feel anxious about all the aspirations and needs that hold power even over Oblomov; how can he be satisfied with his station in his life, feel calm in his lonely, individual, exclusive happiness…; 341). In a world that is permeated by grotesque malleability, this inflexible character is bound to seem stiff and flat. In comparison to the intriguing emotional and aesthetic paradoxes contained by even the simpler, secondary characters such as Zakhar or Agafia Matveevna, and even more, set against the complexities of Olga and Oblomov's inner worlds, the harmony and calmness of Stolz's interiority are bound to disappoint. He is a non-grotesque character in an ambiguous and paradoxical reality. We can compare Stolz to Lopukhov, the "new man" presented by Chernyshevsky in *What Is to Be Done?* (*Chto delat'?* 1863). Lopukhov did become a positive hero. But he was a rational man in a rational world. *What Is to Be Done* offers the depiction not only of a social, but also of an emotional utopia (Paperno 23). Stolz on the other hand, clashes against the affectively grotesque world that surrounds him.

As an alternative, Dobroliubov suggested looking for someone else to direct our sympathetic identification towards: Olga. Interestingly, Olga does not escape the grotesque affective system of the novel. While her confusing love for Oblomov is explained and justified rationally, she still experiences some inexplicable, unreadable feelings until the very end of the narrative. After her marriage and the birth of her children, she reaches the point of "maximum development" and has nowhere left to go. She feels sad and unsatisfied. Stolz generalizes: this is not just Olga's problem, it is an essential part of the human condition: "Это не твоя грусть; это общий недуг человечества" (This is not your sadness; it is an ailment of all humanity; PSS 4: 462). This statement, however, does not resolve Olga's confusing and grotesque feelings. Oblomov had already arrived at this conclusion, anticipating Stolz, when after yet another reproach he asked his friend in annoyance: "Да я ли один? …не пересчитаешь: наше имя легион!" (Do you think it's only me? …You wouldn't be able to count us: our name is Legion; PSS 4, 184)!

Oblomov's statement, however, is once again a call for compassion, rather than a diagnosis. In the same way that almost all the characters in the novel are vulnerable to fragmentation, distortion, exaggeration, and hybridization, almost all of them also experience grotesque, conflicting feelings. Goncharov rejects the idea it is possible to examine the innermost depths of an individual and offer a reasonable explanation for everything they feel and think. There is no rational explanation for the existential ennui that plagues us all, for this "ailment of all humanity." In the end, Olga accepts Stolz's explanation both for her love for Oblomov and for her dissatisfaction. Her fate, however, remains unresolved in terms of the classic plot. We know that her love for Oblomov could not have led to a satisfactory narrative end either. In the end, in her grotesque affectivity and unresolvedness, Olga is closer to Oblomov than it might seem at first.

Conclusions

Oblomov presents a positive hero that most readers dislike and a likable antihero that most readers feel conflicted about. Yet the novel is a success, not a failure. Partially, as many critics have pointed out, this success is to be attributed to Goncharov's talent for realism, his extraordinary attention to detail, etc. But at the same time, it is its grotesque affective and aesthetic system that allows for its complexities and paradoxes, which enrich both the narrative and the characters, turning it into a classic. The novel assimilates and resists physiological and psychopathological trends of its time, letting them coexist in its grotesque spaciousness. Meanwhile, one position does emerge in it, despite the contradictions: people are not brain organs or monsters to be examined and gawked at in biographical sketches, they are creatures of God, and they should be treated as such, with compassion. Oblomov himself is such a creature, and Goncharov invites his readers not to be superficial, cold observers. In this sense, we can identify Agafia Matveevna as the real heroine of the novel: she is the only one who does not try to force her reading of him on Oblomov, but rather appreciates him for exactly who he is.

Chapter Three

Contagion and Disgust in Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Children*

> Treat Bazarovism however you please - that is your business;
> but you won't be able to stop it; it is just the same as cholera.
> Pisarev, "Bazarov"

When Dmitrii Pisarev, one of the most prominent radical critics of his time, calls Bazarovism as endemic as cholera, he is engaging in a political polemic.[36] While he is referring to the very real, and deadly, outbreaks of cholera that regularly swept through Russia starting in 1823, the critic uses this metaphor to provocatively position himself with the "children," firmly against the "fathers."[37] The choice of illness is not casual: unlike tuberculosis or other fevers, associated at the time with "beautiful death" and fascinating, consumptive young women, cholera brought about degrading and embarrassing bodily symptoms (Sontag 41). We should note that Pisarev uses Bazarovism, rather than Bazarov, in his metaphor. If we were to unpack what the critic meant, we could rephrase it this way: Bazarovism, or radical materialism, is a youth movement that polite society might want to hide or ignore, but, like cholera, it is an overflowing force that will eradicate anything standing in its way. Using this metaphor as a point of departure, I argue that the idea of Bazarov himself (rather than Bazarovism) as cholera can be expanded upon and explored not in a political sense, but in a literary one.

When the novel was being written, critics urged Realist writers to imitate psychologists in their writing. As part of his resistance against the scientistic call for exhaustive representation of characters' inner lives, Turgenev engaged not only with the mimetic, but also with the aesthetic problem of representation of interiority. The author held that a writer should “быть психологом, но тайным: он должен знать и чувствовать корни явлении, но представляет только самые явления – в их расцвете и увядании” (be a psychologist, but a hidden one: he should know and feel the roots of phenomena, but present only the phenomena – in their blossoming and fading, PSS Pis’ma 4: 243).[38] Despite the fact that a fictional narrator has potentially unlimited access into a character’s mind in a way that no real person, or psychologist, could possibly have, Turgenev pursued illegibility. In creating Bazarov as an affectively illegible character,[39] the novelist resisted the physiological turn in Russian Realism emphasizing, on the contrary, the ultimate impenetrability of mind and soul.

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[36] For a commentary on Pisarev's cultural impact as a writer and as a public figure, see Pozefsky.
[37] Cholera epidemics would re-emerge to haunt Russians time and time again, before and after *Fathers and Children* was published in 1862. An interesting study of the socio-political impacts of the pandemic is McGrew's *Russia and the Cholera (1823-1832).* A broader look at cholera, history and society across Europe up to 1917 can be found in Evans.

While at first glance much of the heated rhetoric surrounding the novel’s publication seems to be centered on politics –conservatives thought Turgenev portrayed Bazarov too sympathetically; progressives, not sympathetically enough– I argue that a problem of affective illegibility underlies the contradictory reactions that Bazarov elicits in the reader. Pisarev, in his famous response to the novel, the article titled “Bazarov” quoted in the epigraph to this chapter, praises Turgenev for his “truthful” representation of the protagonist and recognizes the nihilist doctor as a worthy representative of the radical youth. Despite his defense of the novel and its hero, Pisarev takes issue with Turgenev’s feelings towards Bazarov. According to the critic, Turgenev was too weak and sensitive: “как нервная женщина, как растение "не тронь меня", сжимается болезненно от самого легкого соприкосновения с букетом базаровщины" (like a nervous woman, like a "touch-me-not" plant, he shrinks painfully from the slightest contact with the bouquet of Bazarovism, 170). Pisarev was far from being an outlier: on the contrary, much of the criticism of this novel, throughout and after the author's life, has tried to categorize Bazarov based on feelings, in particular, Turgenev's feelings for his literary creation.[40] Evidently succumbing to this external pressure, and to his readers' impatience with paradox or ambiguity (Mathewson 90), Turgenev himself felt the need to comment multiple times over the years on his own ambiguous feelings for his hero.[41] Critics have quoted extensively from the author's correspondence and journal entries to demonstrate either his sympathy or antipathy towards the young nihilist (Lebedev, Lowe, Mathewson, Moser, Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii). This focus on affectivity has likewise persisted in more recent criticism of the novel.[42]

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[38] This approach led critics to comment on a perceived emotional barrier in all of Turgenev’s novels between readers and characters. Markovich, for example, characterized each of the heroes in Turgenev’s first four novels as “a riddle” whose inner worlds are closed off from the reader; these characters, for Markovich, are always foreign and strange (*Chelovek* 45). Similar readings can be found in Costlow, Bialyi, and Allen.

[39] There is a growing focus in affect theory on the (partial) unknowability of our emotional and bodily responses to the world. From psychoanalytical theories of the unconscious to contemporary affect theory the intrinsic limits of introspection have been examined at length. This idea is treated in excellent detail in Marta Figlerowicz’s *Spaces of Feelings.*

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[40] Further examples of political/affective reactions on the progressive side are M. A. Antonovich's article "Asmodeus of Our Times" (*Asmodei nashego vremeni*) published in *The Contemporary* (*Sovremmenik*), where the critic famously accused Bazarov of being a caricature aimed as an attack towards the radical youth. Antonovich claims that: "Bazarov has absolutely no heart. He is unfeeling as a stone, as cold as ice and as fierce as a tiger" (42). From the conservative camp, arguments that accused Turgenev of the exact opposite thing were just as abundant. For a discussion of the polemic in the thick journals that ensued after the publication of *Fathers and Children,* see Berlin (31-32), Pustovoit (212-16), and Reifman.

[41] In an often-quoted letter to I.P. Borisov, from January 1870, Turgenev writes: "чувства мои к Базарову — личные мои чувства — были смутного свойства (любил ли я его, ненавидел ли — господь ведает!) — а между тем образ вышел до того определенный, что немедленно вступил в жизнь и пошел действовать особняком на свой салтык" (My feelings for Bazarov –my personal feelings– were of a confused nature (whether I loved him or hated him, the Lord knows!), nevertheless the image came out so defined that he immediately came alive and started to act in his own particular way, PSS Pis'ma 10: 107). We might note here that there is an important difference between being well-defined and legible. The particular vividness that makes Bazarov "come alive" does not contradict his complexity. On the contrary, because he is so true to life, he is harder to read than a flatter, literary type would be. For a discussion of Turgenev's feelings towards Bazarov and criticism, see Lowe (199-200).

[42] In addition to the Russian and Soviet examples already mentioned, in Western scholarship there is Moser (84); Mathewson in *The Positive Hero in Russian Literature* (1958) mentions the problem of mixing emotions and social convictions (103). Jane Costlow in her 1990 book *Worlds Within Worlds* addresses Turgenev's own repulsion and attraction towards Bazarov as

Another important tendency can be uncovered in the criticism of *Fathers and Children*, that is, reading the novel through parallels, or dualistic pairings: certain characters, such as Nikolai Kirsanov, Arkadii, and Katia, represent nature and poetry, while others, such as Odintsova, Pavel Kirsanov, and Bazarov, represent reason and artificiality (Gerigk, Mikhailovskii, Lunacharskii, Lowe, Bialyi). On closer scrutiny, however, Bazarov does not fit in this dualistic division at all. While in the beginning Bazarov might appear just as unfeeling and guided by logic as Pavel Kirsanov and Odintsova, this impression is soon dispelled, and the young doctor acts more and more irrationally as the novel progresses. Scholars have noticed this trend in Bazarov, and have discussed a split nihilist/Romantic, logical/emotional identity, even going as far as talking about "two Bazarovs" (Lebedev 442, Markovich *Turgenev*). I argue, however, that Bazarov never belonged to the rational camp; neither does he ever join the romantic camp. His interiority and his behavior remain contradictory and illegible from beginning to end. Rather than rationality or romanticism, he represents a (grotesque) excess of life and feeling. I propose that at the root both the tempestuous polemics surrounding the novel and of its lasting success as a canonized classic lies an intense irritation, which is caused neither by Turgenev's love or hate for the character, nor by Bazarov's nihilism, nor his alleged rationalism. Rather, the irritation derives from the disgust he causes in the other characters with his excessive life force and from his emotional illegibility, which make it impossible to find a place for Bazarov within the novel's dualistic pairs. This physical and emotional grotesqueness prevents him from fitting neatly in either camp, and in so doing it identifies him as an extraneous element, and thus a potential agent of contamination. I consider grotesque affectivity as a literary

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mirrored in Odintsova's character (133). Elizabeth Allen in her book *Beyond Realism* (1992) discusses the role of language, point of view and omniscient narrator in dealing with the emotionally disturbing in *Fathers and Children* (100-172).

device used to create an illegible protagonist. Whether the ambiguous feelings that Bazarov elicits mirror Turgenev's own feelings for his literary creation becomes irrelevant, in that illegibility itself becomes the goal.

Bazarov as Cholera

The cholera metaphor becomes important when we examine Bazarov as an agent of contagion. First, for the duration of the novel, despite being the object of constant attention and inquiry from the other characters, Bazarov remains unreadable, just like cholera, which was the subject of countless medical studies at the time, while its origin and nature remained largely unknown. With this character Turgenev protested against the demand for limitless clarity put forward by contemporaneous criticism influenced by scientism. Bazarov is affectively illegible: his actions, as well as his thoughts and feelings, are presented exhaustively, yet seem incongruous and even inappropriate. This does not correspond exactly with what Marta Figlerowicz calls a "flat protagonist." Flat protagonists, according to Figlerowicz, are characters who, given their limited capacities, seem to have been given "too much narrative space" (3). Figlerowicz argues that flat protagonists draw attention to the limitations of a particular person's self-expression in attracting and holding our interest, because they fail to hold the interest of other characters in the novel (4-7). Turgenev does show that "there are limits to how much one's body and mind can offer for [extensive] scrutiny" (Figlerowicz 10), but he does so by creating a protagonist who, rather than being less interesting than expected when we read him, remains ultimately illegible. Bazarov piques everyone's interest; he attracts the most attention, feelings, thoughts, love, and hate (Strakhov 199).[43] Yet nobody can access his interiority. Unlike Figlerowicz's flat protagonists, who affect other characters surprisingly little, Bazarov surprises us with how much he affects the other characters given how little they understand him. We are never able to understand exactly how or why, but he has such an influence over the other characters that he threatens to wipe them out with his power of contagion.

Secondly, like an endemic illness, Bazarov represents a constant danger to the other characters in the novel, threatening to disrupt their peaceful gentry life not only with his political ideas, but also by infecting them, on one hand with his excessive, repugnant bodily energy –a "life-contagion"– and on the other with his inappropriate feelings: an "affective contagion." In a letter to Sluchevskii from April 1862, Turgenev explains the origin of Bazarov's character: "Мне мечталась фигура сумрачная, дикая, большая, до половины выросшая из почвы, сильная, злобная, честная — и всё-таки обреченная на погибель" (I imagined a gloomy, wild, large figure, half grown out of the earth, strong, spiteful, honest – and doomed to perish nonetheless, PSS Pis'ma 5: 59). There is a sense of overflow, uncontainability in this figure who has burst out of the ground, wild and large. In his quasi-bestial aliveness he reminds us of our own animality, which, scholars agree, seems to be the fulcrum of the feeling of disgust (Rozin 819-20, Nussbaum 92, Miller 21). Olga Matich, in her article "Poetics of Disgust," recognizes the intrinsic interconnectedness between grotesque as a literary mode and the "conflicted affect" that is disgust (284). Additionally, disgust as a feeling serves the purpose of keeping us safe from pollutants, elements that put us at risk of infection (Menninghaus 99, Miller 2). Not only is Bazarov doomed to perish, but he puts others at risk with his excesses as well. The kind of grotesque life force he represents, which does not fit into the temperance of gentry life, is at the root of the disgust the other characters feel for him, which ultimately urges them to separate him from the group in order to avoid a "life contagion." Thus, with the term life contagion I point to the insertion of uncontrollable, repulsive energies into the life of the gentry, which is normally a closed-off system.

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[43] Horst-Jürgen Gerigk in his 2015 monograph on Turgenev argues that Bazarov is the only "round character" in the novel, while everyone else is a flat character (87).

Grotesque affectivity threatens affective contagion. When the other characters are exposed to Bazarov's out-of-place being and feeling they don't just experience disgust and discomfort, they are at risk of being infected with both his creaturely life force, *and* with his inappropriate feelings. Thus, with the term affective contagion, I indicate the possibility of passing one owns problematic feelings to others. In other words, when exposed to Bazarov's grotesque affectivity, the other characters risk starting to experience incongruous, ambiguous feelings themselves.

Disgust and Life Contagion

The novel is narrated mostly from the point of view of Arkadii Kirsanov, a young *barin* who comes back to his father's estate after graduating from university and brings along a mysterious new friend with him, Evgenii Bazarov. At the Kirsanovs' estate, Marino, we meet Arkadii's father, Nikolai, and his uncle Pavel. The two young friends then travel to a nearby town, where they are both smitten with a beautiful, young widow, Anna Sergeevna Odintsova. Their rivalry does not last too long as Arkadii falls in love with Anna Sergeevna's younger sister, Katia, while after a courtship period Odintsova rejects Bazarov. The young doctor then returns to Marino but ends up quarreling and dueling with Pavel Kirsanov over the honor of Nikolai's common law wife, Fenechka. This also leads him to end his friendship with Arkadii. Bazarov, humiliated and alone, returns to his own parents' modest estate. A few weeks after that, the young doctor gets infected with typhus while dissecting a corpse and dies shortly thereafter. With Bazarov gone, everything else seems to settle for the other characters: Odintsova remarries, Katia and Arkadii marry as do Nikolai and Fenechka, Pavel Petrovich leaves the countryside and travels abroad as he had long planned to do. Bazarov represents a dangerous interruption into the other characters' lives and once his excessive, grotesque presence has been removed and everyone is out of danger of infection, life can continue as before.

Bazarov disrupts the lives of the other characters not through his nihilist ideas, but, first, through the disgust he provokes with his excessive life force. Disgust originates in a threat to the "integrity of the body envelope" (Rozin 819), thus it surges when something appears that represents a threat of contagion (Menninghaus 99, Miller 2). As Aurel Kolnai puts it in his groundbreaking work on disgust, it is the experience of the proximity of the unwanted (524-26). Bazarov's repulsive bodily existence is figured first in the way that the narrator describes his hands. For other characters in the novel, especially for the women, hands and arms are used in a synecdochally conventional way to signify their beauty. Fenechka belongs to the natural/romantic camp and her hands and arms are sensual, carnal. Odinstova on the other hand belongs to the artificial/rational camp, and her hands and arms are cold, immobile. Pavel Petrovich is another representative of high society, and he stands firmly in the artificial/rational camp. His hands reflect his appearance and personality. He is a dashing, cold gentleman, always praised for his, almost unnatural, good looks. When Arkadii, Bazarov, and Nikolai arrive at Marino and meet Pavel Petrovich, we see a disembodied hand, "красивую руку с длинными розовыми ногтями" (a beautiful hand, with long pink nails, PSS 7: 19), which Pavel Petrovich "вынул из кармана панталон" (extracts from a trouser pocket, PPS 7: 18-19). The hand is given to Pavel's nephew, Arkadii, but is refused to the nihilist, Evgenii, and before their introduction it gets put back in the trousers pocket, like a delicate instrument that needs to be stored out of harm's way. Pavel's hands fit neatly into the divide between natural and artificial, where he clearly belongs to Odintsova's side.

Pavel's hands are particularly interesting, however, because they are juxtaposed to Bazarov's hands. When Bazarov is first introduced in the novel, only a few pages before we meet Pavel and his immaculate hands, we see a tall figure, whose face is obscured by a hood. We are then presented with a "обнаженную красную руку" (naked, red hand, PPS 7: 11), which the figure does not offer to Nikolai Petrovich right away. The unpleasant impression created by this floating, crimson hand is heightened by the fact that soon afterwards we will see Pavel's perfectly groomed hand. In addition to being visually unpleasant, and tactilely rough (PSS 7: 125), Bazarov's hand is not just a visual complement to his personality and appearance: it can also become an instrument of violence. At Bazarov's parents' estate, the nihilist "растопырил свои длинные и жесткие пальцы..." (spread his long and rough fingers) and threatened to suffocate Arkadii (PSS 7: 122). The two young men are interrupted by the arrival of Bazarov's father. While Pavel's hands only serve the purpose of being admired from a distance, Bazarov's hands are active rather than passive, and can be used for malicious means. They synecdochally represent the danger that Bazarov's eruptive, repulsive life force poses to the other characters in the novel.

As his tactilely and visually unpleasant hands are ready for explosive action, so is Bazarov's whole presence teeming with life. Disgust seems to be intrinsically linked to the consciousness of our own life and animality. Bazarov's physical presence is characterized by excess of life and a lack of impulse control, which is fundamental in distinguishing us from other non-human animals: he has long, thick hair (PSS 7: 11), he eats a lot (PSS 7: 19), and drinks a lot (PSS 7: 67). His internal, hidden bodily life tends to spill outward, for example, when he shows Arkadii his revoltingly yellow tongue (PSS 7: 104). He brings with him a characteristic and offensive smell, which is always contrasted with other, pleasant, smells. Surprisingly soon after he installs himself in a guest bedroom at Marino, the space becomes permeated by “какой-то медицинско-хирургический запах, смешанный с запахом дешевого табаку” (a certain medical-surgical smell, mixed with the smell of cheap tobacco, PSS 7: 34). This is contrasted only a couple of pages later to how Fenechka’s room smells: “недавно выкрашенным полом, ромашкой и мелиссой” (of recently painted floor, chamomile and lemon balm, PSS 7: 36). As opposed to Anna Sergeevna and Pavel Kirsanov, who are frequently depicted sitting still or making measured, slow movements, Bazarov is always moving, always active. He is hot-blooded; when he works a lot he experiences a sort of work “fever” (PSS 7: 133). His blood boils when he thinks about Anna Sergeevna, which is a direct contrast with her blood, which always flows calmly, even when her imagination takes a flight of fancy (PSS 7: 83-84).

Furthermore, because of his provocative political convictions, the young nihilist brings attention to certain physical aspects of life that high society has spent centuries training themselves to ignore. Robert Wilson has noted how disgust can be deliberately used by a certain social group (or artistic movement) to shock and discredit the society they live in (18-29).[44] Bazarov makes a joke about hemorrhoids (PSS 7: 28); he is obsessed with beautiful women in an openly sexual way (PSS 7: 61, 65, 71, 87); he draws attention to the fact, commonly accepted by patriarchal societies such as 19th century Russia, but never talked about openly, that Katia is more attractive than her sister because she is still a virgin (PSS 7: 83). In his continual violation of decency, which demands that all bodily fluids remain inside the body (Miller 51-59, Menninghaus 54), and that the integrity of the body remain intact (Rozin 819), Bazarov draws blood from Pavel Petrovich during their duel, literally and metaphorically ruining the immaculate whiteness of his trousers (PSS 7: 145).

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[44] While Wilson emphasizes how disgust can be used by artists and youth groups to separate themselves from normative culture, Martha Nussbaum and William Ian Miller in their studies of disgust focus on its use by dominant factions to exclude marginalized groups.

Bazarov's death is the ultimate reminder of how disgustingly teeming with life his existence was. Being reminded of our animality means being reminded that we too are vulnerable to decay and death (Nussbaum 92, Rozin 820), and reminded how thin the boundary separating life and death is (Matich 285). Bazarov dies a grotesque, disgusting death after he gets infected by contact with a polluting element, a corpse, and, what is more, that of a peasant, someone from a lower social stratum.[45] Miller reminds us that disgust is a powerful tool to keep the "lowly" elements of society separated from their "superiors" (8-9). By flaunting his own lack of disgust, as he had been doing in regard to gentry societal norms, Bazarov has put himself at risk of infection. If we think of Bazarov as resembling cholera, we see him as a dangerous agent of contagion, who, however, unlike Typhoid Mary, is also susceptible to being infected. He succumbs to what the other characters, protected by their disgust, avoid. When Anna Sergeevna comes to visit him on his deathbed, he cautions her: "Не подходите ко мне: ведь моя болезнь заразительная" (Don't come close to me: my illness is contagious, PSS 7: 182). This is a warning that extends beyond his current sickness. His whole existence is too animalistic, too embodied for the comfort of the other characters. It is disgusting in its excess of life force and, like any disgusting element, Bazarov is a pollutant that puts others at risk of infection.

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[45] Menninghaus describes in detail the difference between a beautiful death and a grotesque, disgusting death (82-84).

The danger that Bazarov represents to gentry life does not stem primarily from his social position of *raznochinets*, or his nihilistic ideas. He threatens the other characters with a life-contagion because the kind of life force Bazarov embodies is disgusting, infectious. Arkadii, Katia, Nikolai, and Fenechka are alive in the Romantic sense, they are in harmony with life and nature. Pavel and Odintsova, on the other hand, are alienated from nature and life, trapped in their rationality, and in this sense, they are as if dead. Bazarov is neither. He represents an alternative to the Romantic ideal of life: he is the life of the bodily, the creaturely, and therefore he represents a danger to both the dead and the "tame" (as Katia calls herself and Arkadii, PSS 7: 156) characters in the novel. As a matter of fact, after being exposed to Bazarov's life contagion, all the other characters, but especially Pavel and Odintsova, barely escape with their lives.

Anna Sergeevna and Pavel Kirsanov are especially vulnerable to the life contagion because their essence is characterized by death. They both have white, motionless hands. They are both identified by paleness. While all other characters in the novel –except Arkadii– are described as pale or paling once throughout the novel (Vasilii Ivanov twice, when his son is dying of typhus), the adjective pale (бледный) or the verb to pale (побледнеть) are used five times for Pavel Kirsanov and six times for Odintsova. They are both almost artificially beautiful and well preserved. Bazarov refers to both of them as bodies, deserving of anatomical study, shifting the focus away from their aliveness in a metaphorical grotesque dismemberment. First Bazarov, talking about Pavel Kirsanov, declares: "Ногти-то, ногти, хоть на выставку посылай!" (Such nails! If only one could send those nails to an exhibition! PSS 7: 20). Later he uses a very similar construction to express his appreciation for Anna Sergeevna's body: "Этакое богатое тело! […] хоть сейчас в анатомический театр" (Such a shapely body! […] If only one could examine it in an anatomical theater, PSS 7: 75). These expressions bring Pavel and

Odintsova closer to corpses, rather than individuals made of body and soul. They also both try to impose the same death-like stillness onto others. Anna Sergeevna regiments everyone’s life on her estate. Pavel forces Nikolai into immobility by preventing him from marrying Fenechka. The artificial rationality that leads to a death-like indifference is as threatening as too violent a life force and presents its own danger of infection, of death-contagion. That is why Pavel Kirsanov and Odintsova ultimately need to be removed from the story, albeit less drastically than Bazarov. Furthermore, because of their drive towards immobility and death, these two characters are the most at risk of being infected by the Bazarov life-contagion. Both characters struggle for the entire novel to resist it. For Pavel, the danger comes in the form of an actual attack of cholera. For Odintsova, the point of no return is when Bazarov’s outburst of beastly passion needs to be fended off.

Odintsova and Bazarov’s is not a love story, but rather a contagion story. Odintsova exposes herself to him in small amounts, but when the viral load becomes too great, she has to step back and quarantine. Bazarov’s potential as disgusting, infectious pollutant is clear from their first encounter: “Ломание Базарова в первые минуты посещения неприятно подействовало на нее, как дурной запах или резкий звук” (Bazarov’s showing off in the first few minutes acted unpleasantly on her, like a fetid odor or a shrill sound, PSS 7: 74). He raises her body temperature like a fever. After a particularly flirtatious evening conversation, before he leaves for the night, Bazarov squeezes Anna Sergeevna’s fingers so hard she almost screams. Afterwards, “долго она оставалась неподвижною, лишь изредка проводя пальцами по своим рукам, которые слегка покусывал ночной холод” (she remained motionless for a long time, only occasionally running her fingers over her hands, which were slightly bitten by the night cold, PSS 7: 94). To let the effect of Bazarov’s closeness dissipate, she needs to lower the temperature of her hands through the cold of the night. Odintsova constantly needs to counteract the bodily effects of Bazarov's proximity, and his overflowing, animalistic life force to maintain herself intact and untouched by the life-contagion. In order to survive, she is forced to cut all ties with him and send him away.

Bazarov dies of typhus, but cholera itself makes an appearance in the novel. His rival, Pavel Kirsanov, suffers an attack of cholera and lives through it. Both Bazarov and Pavel are struck where it hurts most: cholera is indecent, it not only breaks the integrity of the bodily envelope, but because it produces severe diarrhea, it involves feces, the most taboo of substances (Rozin 822). Typhus, on the other hand, compromises one's mind. Bazarov, once again flaunting his lack of disgust and his bodily excess, is unaffected by feces or by contaminated water, the medium through which cholera spreads: we see him emerge from the swamp covered in slime and not care in the least (PSS 7: 26). He does care greatly about his mind, however. Turgenev knew that the *decursus morbi* of typhus involves hallucinatory fever. The author commented that in the end Bazarov is not just seeing dogs, but *red* dogs, because blood at that point would be flooding his brain (Shcherban 18). For the nihilist, losing his mind means losing his most precious asset. Each disease hits each man on a sore spot: a loss of dignity for Pavel and a loss of rationality for Bazarov. Yet one of them survives and the other does not. As mentioned above, Bazarov contracts typhus by coming into contact with the corpse of a peasant. The cause of cholera was not known at the time (it is carried by contaminated water), but it was known that everyone was susceptible to it, regardless of social class. Kirsanov suffers a pretty serious attack of cholera, yet he does not ask for the young doctor's help. Pavel, unlike Bazarov, chooses not to come into too close contact with what he considers a polluting element, and endures the illness in isolation. He survives it, coming out on the other end perfectly combed and shaved, if a little pale

(PSS 7: 134). Keeping his ailment hidden and, in so doing, protecting himself from further contamination with Bazarov saves Pavel from a possibly fatal life contagion. Alas, he won't be able to keep his distance later on, which will cause him to fall victim to Bazarov's affective contagion.

Grotesque Affectivity and Affective Contagion

Affectively, Bazarov once again is the odd man out between the Romantic pairs, who experience only appropriate emotions, and the cold, rational characters, who simply do not feel anything. On one side, Katia, Fenechka, and Nikolai experience feelings that could be deemed appropriate by society, whether it is pleasure derived from music, poetry, or nature; love that can actually culminate in marriage; or in Nikolai's case, a suitable amount of shame for having a child from a woman who is not his wife (PSS 7: 15). Arkadii tends toward the appropriate feelings too, and once he is free from Bazarov's influence he can finally fully embrace them. On the other side of the affective spectrum there are Anna Sergeevna and Pavel Petrovich, who are emotionally blocked. Their stillness of feelings, which mirrors their bodily stillness, means that they are not affected by people, things, and situations as the Romantic characters are.[46] In addition to the life/death opposition, this is a subtler way in which they differ from Bazarov: he is not emotionally blocked; he experiences rather a misplacement of feelings, whereas Pavel and Anna Sergeevna suffer from an incapacity for feeling. Bazarov is not unfeeling; he experiences many emotions, and even violent ones.[47] It is rather Bazarov's nihilism, as scholars have noted, that is inconsistent.[48] He is not the vulgar materialist he professes to be: he is not guided purely by logic. His feelings are, however, grotesque: they are either inappropriate emotional reactions to the situations he is in or, alternatively, incongruous, inexplicable combinations of feelings.

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[46] This distinction has been widely commented upon in criticism; see, for example, Costlow, Lowe.

[47] Markovich, for example, compares Bazarov's sadness to Arkadii's response at being rejected by Odintsova: the young *barin* is able to easily veer towards a more appropriate feeling, forget

Furthermore, both Pavel Kirsanov's and Odintsova's indifference is explained through their backstories. For Pavel, it is a direct consequence of his past and of his traumatic romance with Princess R. Arkadii explains this to Bazarov, and the reader, shortly after we meet his uncle. We get a similar explanation for Odintsova's emotional life, or lack thereof. We learn about her splendid, but not very pragmatic education, which is partially responsible for her cold, artificial personality, and about her father: a charming gambler with a passion for luxury and comfort above all else, which his daughter inherited (PSS 7: 73, 84). Additionally, the narrator gives us a rather long description of her inner life, her drive towards peace and tranquility at all cost, offering an explanation to the reader that clarifies her intentions and behaviors (PSS 7: 83).[49] Partially thanks to these clarifications, and partially thanks to the consistency of their indifference, while we might not feel sympathy for Odintsova or Pavel, we can at least *understand* what they are feeling, or not feeling. Pavel Petrovich's and Anna Sergeevna's affective lives are not grotesque: they are simply empty.

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his disappointment, and fall in love with Katia. This parallel leads Markovich to argue that Bazarov actually feels *more* than the other characters (*Chelovek* 91).

[48] Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii is one of many who argued that everything that links Bazarov to nihilism is purely superficial. According to the critic, Bazarov is really determined as a character by his inner traits, his rich and difficult nature, and his striving for inner freedom ("Bazarov" 455-56). For a more extensive discussion of Bazarov's political views and ideals, see Markovich *Turgenev* (186-192).

[49] Interestingly, a longer explanation of Anna Sergeevna's inner life was added while Turgenev was editing *Fathers and Children* after Annenkov, one of his first two readers, had expressed concerns that the reading public would not be able to understand cold, unfeeling Anna Sergeevna (Lowe 104).

At first, it would seem that Bazarov shares a similar indifference.[50] Arkadii accuses him of self-centeredness, which would mean that Bazarov isn't affected by things that do not concern him or his immediate needs directly. Memories of childhood have no power over him (PSS 7: 113); he thinks that "природа не храм, а мастерская" (nature is not a temple, but a workshop, PSS 7: 43); he is not moved by poetry, music, or art. Another argument for his apparent indifference is the way he behaves towards his parents. He repeatedly delays his return home, and when he finally arrives, after a three-year absence, he only stays for three days. It is Arkadii who signals that there might be more at play here than just indifference. In the novel, Arkadii's point of view often functions as a magnifying glass, which draws our attention to the moments when Bazarov is feeling the inappropriate emotion for the situation. When Bazarov makes fun of Pavel, Arkadii tells him that he should feel compassion instead (PSS 7: 29), and he adds that "презирать его — грешно" (to feel disdain towards him would be sinful, PSS 7: 34). When Bazarov declares that he is ready to leave his parents' estate, Arkadii intervenes once again. To contrast Bazarov's apparent indifference Arkadii comments that he feels especially sorry for his mother (PSS 7: 126), showing love and pity to be the appropriate emotional reaction in this case. Bazarov's parents are presented in pathetic tones, as frail, lonely, old people. They are much older than Arkadii's father Nikolai, even though the two friends are almost the same age. Feeling indifference to their suffering is not a simple show of disinterest, like Pavel not being touched by the beauty of the starry sky (PSS 7: 57), but rather something akin to profound guilt, or cruelty. Because Arkadii expressly called our attention to it, we perceive in Bazarov's affective reaction an inappropriateness that somehow crosses a certain limit of decency, and that makes us, and the other characters in the novel, uncomfortable. The more closely we look at Bazarov's affective life, the more we realize that his indifference is either feigned or superficial, that he in fact experiences an array of different feelings.

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[50] In an article titled "Bazarov i Oblomov," Annenkov argues that these two characters, deep down, are truly the same, and, more specifically, that what they have in common is their indifference towards the outside world and others (269).

His feelings are not limited to anger or pride either, as they would be for someone who simply has a temper problem. For example, we see a more serene, relaxed Bazarov during his short period of friendship with Fenechka: "Даже лицо его изменялось, когда он с ней разговаривал: оно принимало выражение ясное, почти доброе, и к обычной его небрежности примешивалась какая-то шутливая внимательность" (Even his face changed, when he talked to her: it took on a clear, almost kind expression, and some kind of playful attention took the place of his usual carelessness, PSS 7: 135). We notice, however, that these feelings are vague: "almost kind," "some kind of playful attention," rather than being markedly positive or unproblematic. Furthermore, these positive feelings are accompanied by inappropriate feelings, in this case, Bazarov's desire for a woman who has a child with somebody else and, more importantly, who is not interested in him. After he kisses Fenechka without her permission, and to add insult to injury, gets caught by Pavel Kirsanov, once again he experiences annoyance and impatience towards himself: "Базаров вспомнил другую недавнюю сцену, и совестно ему стало, и презрительно досадно" (Bazarov remembered another recent occurrence, and he started feeling both guilty and scornfully annoyed, PSS 7: 139). Guilt and annoyance, as well as pride, are inescapable for Bazarov, and prompt him to accept a duel shortly after this incident. Conflicting, incongruent feelings lead him to act in unexpected ways, which are often illegible not only for the other characters, but for Bazarov himself.

In addition to having inappropriate feelings, Bazarov is also unable to control them. Jane Costlow observed that Turgenev was weary of revolutions and sudden changes because he perceived human beings as having but precarious control over their passions (107). An important element of what makes Bazarov's affective life inadequate and contradictory is precisely his inability to control or hide his feelings. Pavel Kirsanov has inappropriate feelings for Fenechka that he however represses until he calls her "Nellie" (his dead lover's name) in a fever-induced delirium, and even then, he does this only in front of his kind, forgiving brother (PSS 7: 148). Bazarov lacks this ability for repression. What pushes Bazarov to accept a duel with Pavel, despite his better judgment telling him it is a ridiculous proposition, and his political views affirming that it is a Romantic endeavor, is an incontrollable feeling of pride. After accepting Pavel's offer Bazarov remains alone in his room, feeling annoyed by the preposterous proposition he agreed to. At the same time, he feels a surge of incontrollable pride that spurred him to act against his principles (PSS 7: 142). The allegedly rational man of science is dominated by a grotesque affective system: wrong emotions that come out at the wrong time and overpower him.

His grotesque affectivity is present from the very beginning of the story, rather than starting after Bazarov falls in love with Odintsova.[51] During the young men's first visit to Marino, Pavel and Evgenii argue about nihilism. Bazarov loses control, and becomes angry (PSS 7: 50), but then "Ему вдруг стало досадно на самого себя, зачем он так распространился перед этим барином" (he suddenly got annoyed at himself, wondering why he exposed himself like that in front of this nobleman, PSS 7: 51). Bazarov perceives his own anger as inappropriate. He gets similarly annoyed at himself when he feels shy and embarrassed during his first meeting with Odintsova (PSS 7: 72). He dislikes emotions that go against his rational thinking, yet these emotions dominate him. His love for Odintsova, rather than being a trigger for an affective change in Bazarov, is a manifestation of his grotesque affective life. His feelings provoke annoyance and indignation in him: “он с негодованием сознавал романтика в самом себе. […] Он ловил самого себя на всякого рода «постыдных» мыслях, точно бес его дразнил” (with indignation he recognized a romantic in himself. […] He caught himself in all kinds of “shameful thoughts,” as if a demon was teasing him, PSS 7: 87-88). Not only does Bazarov feel emotions that are incongruous or inappropriate for the situation, but he also experiences negative feelings regarding those emotions. As Ngai points out, “commonly it is morally degraded and seemingly unjustifiable […] feelings,” which tend to “produce an unpleasurable feeling *about* the feeling” (10). For Bazarov, all sorts of different feelings provoke an unpleasurable feeling as a reaction because, in a way, they are all seemingly unjustifiable. They emerge at the wrong time or in clashing, grotesque combinations, and they constantly defy Bazarov’s identity based on rationalism and science.

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[51] The idea that Bazarov changes, affectively, *after* he falls in love is shared by many critics, in particular it can be found in Markovich, *Turgenev,* and Markovich, *Chelovek,* as well as in St. John Murphy (57).

In addition to tormenting him, his grotesque affectivity puts others at risk of affective contagion. It is none other than Pavel Kirsanov who first observes the danger of feelings, rather than political slogans. In an argument with the two young men at dinner, Pavel complains about the younger generation, and declares that: “Сперва гордость почти сатанинская, потом глумление. […] И эта зараза уже далеко распространилась” (It starts with almost satanic pride, then mockery. […] And this infection has already spread far and wide, PSS 7: 52). Pavel does not locate the beginning of the infection in dangerous revolutionary ideas, but rather in inappropriate feelings. Bazarov’s grotesque feelings have the potential to infect everyone around him. After Bazarov’s death, all that is left of him for the tame characters is a sense of awkwardness. We find them all gathered at Marino: “все улыбались и тоже как будто извинялись; всем было немножко неловко, немножко грустно и в сущности очень хорошо, […] точно все согласились разыграть какую-то простодушную комедию” (Everyone smiled and also seemed to apologize; everyone was a little awkward, a little sad and in fact very good, […] as if they had agreed to play a role in some kind of innocent comedy, PSS 7: 185). The tone here is markedly different from the rest of the novel, and the characters themselves feel an impalpable discomfort in the almost naïve lightness of the situation. Bazarov’s death does not cause the expected, or appropriate feeling: grief. Rather, it causes a little bit of sadness, and a little bit of awkwardness. Bazarov’s affective contagion thus prevents the other characters from mourning appropriately.

As was the case for the life-contagion, Pavel and Odintsova are at greater risk of affective contagion as well. In order to expel Bazarov from his environment, Pavel Kirsanov finally challenges him to a duel. As the old servant Prokof’ich reminds us, a duel is a perfectly acceptable way to resolve a conflict in Pavel’s world. This duel, however, does not happen between peers, which makes it shameful (PSS 7: 150).[52] The confrontation between the two men is paradoxical: Bazarov’s irritant presence causes mixed feelings of contempt and disgust in Pavel, feelings that push him in opposite directions. Dueling with someone of a lower social class, for whom you feel contempt, is embarrassing, yet Bazarov is disgusting for Pavel and disgust always includes an element of the insistent and intolerable (Ngai 333). Thus, while usually disgust serves to keep the lowly separate from its superiors (Miller 8-9), when a repulsive element is forcefully inserted into the superiors’ space it cannot be ignored and calls for some type of resolution, in this case, an embarrassing duel. By not being able to resist his own inappropriate feelings for Fenechka, Bazarov infects Pavel, breaking through the armor of his indifference and making him feel, and act, inappropriately.

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[52] An excellent overview on the duel in Russian nineteenth century literature and culture is Reyfman. Gerigk connects the literary use of the duel to *Fathers and Children* in particular (89-90). See also Scholle.

For Odintsova, Bazarov is not intolerably disgusting, but rather he represents a mixture of attraction and repulsion.[53] This intrinsic affective contradiction is at the heart of Odintsova's attitude towards Bazarov. When Bazarov declares to her that he loves her, he trembles with "страсть, похожая на злобу" (a passion similar to spite) and "Одинцовой стало и страшно и жалко его" (Odintsova suddenly starts to fear and pity him, PSS 7: 98). For several hours after this encounter, she feels conflicted and confused. Bazarov's inappropriate love cannot be simply accepted or rejected; it causes an emotional reaction that is characterized by the same grotesque ambiguity that operates within his own affective system. He feels passion and spite, she feels fear mixed with pity. Bazarov infects Odintsova with his inadequate feelings, provoking an equally grotesque emotional reaction in her. She has to spend time alone, distancing herself from these incongruous feelings in order to regain her indifference, or lack of feeling. Thus she has to separate herself from him not only because his life force threatens her death-like existence, but also because his passion, mixed with spite, and bordering the bestial, provokes in her equally as grotesque feelings that are difficult to read. This is the ultimate threat to her death-like indifference. Had she not stepped away in time she might have, like Pavel, given in to her grotesque feelings with a similarly disastrous result.

Melancholia Is Anger Turned Inward

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[53] The closeness between disgust and desire has been articulated, building on Kant, by both Menninghaus (104-107) and Ngai (335).

The other characters spend much of the novel (unsuccessfully) trying to understand “who is Bazarov.” But does he do the same? As a matter of fact, he openly refuses to express an opinion about himself. During one of their conversations, Odintsova invites Bazarov to tell her more about himself, but he deflects the question. She then asks him how we determine our own value. Bazarov replies: “Это уже не мое дело; это дело другого разбирать, какая моя цена” (That’s not my business; determining my value it’s someone else’s job, PSS 7: 93). Yet, every time someone actually tries to determine his value, Bazarov refuses to be defined by others. Whenever he receives an external judgment, he rejects it. Anna Sergeevna, for example, tries to express her conflicting feelings towards him: “Вы знаете, что я вас боюсь... и в то же время я вам доверяю, потому что в сущности вы очень добры” (You know that I fear you… yet at the same time I trust you, because you are a good man at heart, PSS 7: 166). Bazarov rejects this definition of himself as a good man. He also refuses to be pitied: “Человек я бедный, но милостыни еще до сих пор не принимал” (I am a poor man, yet I have never accepted charity, PSS 7: 169). Unfortunately, the other characters pity him all the time. Their pity does express something about his value, and it speaks to some essential goodness that, even more than his charm and the hold he has over other people, makes it difficult to discard Bazarov as a villain. His rejection of this “goodness,” however, leaves us with a sense of confusion, of lack of resolution.

We might be able to look elsewhere to gain insight into Bazarov’s views on himself. When saying goodbye to Arkadii for the last time, Bazarov gives a final speech:

> Для нашей горькой, терпкой, бобыльной жизни ты не создан. В тебе нет ни дерзости, ни злости […] Вы, например, не деретесь — и уж воображаете себя

> молодцами,— а мы драться хотим. Да что! […] тебе приятно самого себя бранить; а нам это скучно — нам других подавай! нам других ломать надо!
>
> (You are not made for our bitter, rough, solitary life. In you there is neither audacity, nor anger […] you [noblemen] do not fight –and you congratulate yourselves about that– but we want to fight. So what! […] you are pleased scolding yourself; but we have had enough of self-criticism –give us someone else! We need to break somebody else! PSS 7: 169)

Bazarov does not want to engage in self-criticism: not only can he not understand himself, but, more importantly, he has no interest in trying. It is much easier for him to focus all his excessive energy outward. Problems start to emerge precisely when there are no others to focus on and his gaze is forced inwards. When Bazarov is not engaged in a fight, he does not know what to feel, and he starts experiencing boredom and spite. This is the paradox of his personality, he rejects everything and everyone, yet he is completely dependent on others to function in the world. His nihilism and his provocations are an escape from melancholy. At one point he confesses to Arkadii: “мои родители … заняты и не беспокоятся о собственном ничтожестве, оно им не смердит... а я... я чувствую только скуку да злость” (my parents … keep busy and they do not worry about their own insignificance, they don’t smell its rot… but for me… I only feel boredom and anger, PSS 7: 119). There is a subtle critique here of the seeming necessity to look inward, to explore all the nooks and crannies of our personality. After getting rejected by Anna Sergeevna and expelled from Pavel’s sphere of existence after the duel, there are no more “others” to engage with, and Bazarov starts to wither: “лихорадка работы с него *соскочила* и заменилась тоскливою скукой и глухим беспокойством. Странная усталость замечалась во всех его движениях, даже походка его, твердая и стремительно смелая, изменилась” (his work fever *deserted* him and was replaced by melancholy, boredom, and dull uneasiness. A weird fatigue was noticeable in all his movements, even his gait, firm and swiftly bold, changed, PSS 7: 171, emphasis in the original). After Bazarov is cut off from all others, melancholy sets in and he is inevitable drawn towards his tragic destiny. There is a hidden danger that comes with such in depth self-exploration. Menninghaus notes: “In ennui, disgust becomes self-referential: what is rejected is not an alien indigestible entity, but one’s own life –which itself assumes a position of indigestible alterity” (147). Once the disgust turns inward, the pollutant to remove becomes oneself. His bodily and affective excesses, which are now prevented from flowing outwardly, get trapped inside and fester.

Conclusions

Reading Bazarov through the lens of grotesque affectivity and infection allows us to destabilize certain long-established divisions within scholarship on *Fathers and Children* and to examine Turgenev’s pursuit of the limits of psychological understanding of self, which pushed against the scientific culture and criticism of his time. *Fathers and Children* presents the protagonist, the alleged representative of the rational, scientistic camp, as incapable and unwilling to know himself, and the other characters as incapable of “reading” him. The novel does not side with or against Bazarov, but rather it remains purposefully ambiguous because the character is illegible. The impossibility to fit Bazarov into the dichotomies that structure the other characters in the novel complicates the natural/artificial, romanticism/rationalism model that has traditionally been ascribed to the novel, and gains its protagonist a place among the most controversial, yet most popular heroes of Russian literature. “Focused thus on the man and not the idea, we see that the balance of good and bad qualities in Bazarov which may well have been 'ideologically harmful' to the revolutionary cause in 1862 is the precise source of his universal appeal" (Mathewson 95). It is precisely through his grotesque (i.e., intrinsically ambiguous) contradictions that Bazarov becomes a round protagonist, despite (or perhaps thanks to) the limited access we have to his inner world.

Furthermore, the novel presents the endeavor of truly understanding someone else, or oneself, as dangerous, and potentially undesirable. It promotes distance, rather than closeness, as the safest approach to life and feelings. With Bazarov, Turgenev draws attention to the limits of literary representation and accessibility to one's inner life. When the other characters try to get too close to Bazarov, they are at risk of life and affective contagion. When the nihilist is forced to look inside, he experiences ennui, or disgust turned inward, which eventually leads to his death.

Finally, our expanded metaphor has shown how vulnerable the closed-off gentry structure was to any extraneous element, which could easily infect and corrupt the whole system. While a part of the perceived danger to the fathers brought about by the children depends upon new political or scientific ideas, there is another aspect to this conflict. Bazarov is an agent of contagion because he introduces the out of place into the novel, being disgusting in his body and grotesque in his feelings. The other characters are able to fend off the contagion only by completely removing the pollutant from their sanitized environment. Any exposure to an extraneous element could otherwise be fatal. This vulnerability reveals more than anything the fragility of Turgenev's world, the world of the fathers, which needs to be carefully preserved. As readers, some of us are irritated by the young nihilist and perceive only the author's antipathy, while others are drawn in by the riddle he represents, and see him as a true literary hero. But regardless of where we stand, Bazarov is like cholera: there is no vaccine.

Chapter Four

Anxiety and Hope in Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin's *The Golovlevs*

> Indeed, one of Saltykov's chief problems in writing the book
> must have been the avoidance of tediousness,
> for it certainly exhibits very little drama.
>
> Karl Kramer, *Satiric Form in Gospoda Golovlevy*

Before *The Golovlevs*, despite being a famous writer, journalist, and editor, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin was not necessarily considered a novelist.[54] But when the first installment of the Golovlev family history, "Family Court" (*Semeinnyi sud*) was published in *Notes of the Fatherland*, in October 1875, as part of a series called *Well-Intentioned Speeches* (*Blagonamerennye rechi*), the reading public and some of the most prominent novelists and critics of the time were immediately smitten. Turgenev, for example, famously wrote Saltykov a letter in which he praised the characters, not only the mother, but the two sons, Stepan (who is the protagonist, with Arina, of the first sketch), and Porfirii. "It is so good that one cannot help thinking: why, instead of sketches, doesn't Saltykov write an entire novel?" (Turgenev PSS Pis'ma 11:149). The praise he received encouraged Saltykov to write three more installments, "Kith and Kin" (*Po-rodstvennomu*) in December 1875, "Family Scores" (*Semeinnye itogi*) in March 1876, and the "The Niece" (*Plemiannushka*) in May 1876. Then, the readers' enthusiasm for Iudushka in particular led him to write three more chapters centered around him and his fate: "Escheated" (*Vymorochnyi*) in August 1876, "Family Joys" in December 1876 (eventually retitled "Illicit Family Joys," *Nedozvolennye semeinnye radosti*), and finally, after much thought and a discarded draft, in May 1880 he completed the final chapter centered around Iudushka, which would eventually be called "The Reckoning" (*Raschet*). Saltykov discussed the appropriate ending for Iudushka Golovlev with many friends and correspondents, the most notable of whom was Ivan Goncharov (even though Saltykov did not take Goncharov's advice regarding Iudushka's fate).[55] In other words, there was not only enthusiasm and but also real public participation in the creation of this novel.[56]

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[54] Bushmin observes that the appearance of *The Golovlevs* was greeted by readers, critics, and fellow writers as the revelation of a new side of Saltykov's creative gift (*Satira* 197).

Readers received Iudushka enthusiastically and he has been said to be a "universal" character (Foote 21).[57] Iudushka's appeal is often credited with setting *The Golovlevs* apart from his previous work.[58] Iudushka is the central axis around which the family's destruction takes place. In one way or another, he contributes to the death of his two brothers, his mother, and his three sons; he robs and expropriates property from his own family as well as peasants and neighbors; and tries to lure his own niece into an incestuous relationship.[59] He represents a different example of illegibility than the enigmatic characters we analyzed in the previous chapters, who gave rise to heated controversies in the reading public and in criticism. Porfirii has the appeal of a universally recognizable odious character. Unlike Oblomov or Bazarov, he is not characterized by affective contradictions, but rather by an utter and complete lack of feeling. This affective void makes him illegible to the other characters, who might be petty and vengeful, but still experience feelings towards others and the world. The entire narrative structure hinges upon his illegibility and the other characters' attempts to read him and escape his influence, as well as the missed opportunities for a true "reckoning" in which Iudushka would attempt to read himself.

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[55] Goncharov thought that anything resembling a suicide would mean that something akin to a conscience had awaken in Porfirii, which he didn't believe was possible. He recommended ending his life by some external means instead (*Ocherki, stat'i, pis'ma* 423-26).

[56] For a detailed history of publication and readers' reactions see Pokusaev 18-19.

[57] In Soviet criticism this process was probably aided by the fact that Lenin made the nickname "little Judas," Iudushka, proverbial by using it virtually against anyone who dared oppose him.

[58] Between 1872 and 1875 Saltykov had published four other sketches that dealt with the topic of family in his *Well-Intentioned Speeches* series, with plots and themes not too different from *The Golovlevs,* but none of those sketches inspired readers to ask for more the way that "Family Court" did.

[59] William Mills Todd discusses the trajectory of the hero in Russian literature as well as its parodic undoing in Iudushka's character in his article "The Anti-Hero of a Thousand Faces." He convincingly argues that Porfirii represents an example of anti-hero that has no equal in Russian literature.

This internal illegibility and external appeal are at the core of Iudushka's success as a character. As N.K. Mikhailovskii suggests in his essay "Shchedrin," Iudushka's character feels so "real" that the reader "trembles" together with the other characters around him. We understand that, as a person, Iudushka would be intolerable. But, as a fictional character, the reader cannot tear themselves away, even though they are experiencing the same anguish and fear as the characters in the novel (442-43). It is our distance from the anxiety Iudushka provokes that allows us to revel in it. It gives us the thrill of tension while being clearly separate from us and our world. The reader experiences anguish and fear that the other characters won't be able to read Porfirii and will fall into his trap. There is excitement in this anguish. If Iudushka's traps followed one another without any variation, not only would tediousness be a problem, as Kramer feared, but the feeling of anguish, or anxiety, which relies on the uncertainty of what will happen next, would soon be replaced by ennui in following a monotonous succession of (non-)events. This question brings us to the structure of the novel overall.

On one hand, the Golovlevs keep repeating a cycle of inevitable death and destruction. The novel is structured on repetitions and variations on the same themes, and even the same words.[60]

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[60] The adjective odious, постылый, for example, is repeated in the novel over and over again, and used by Stepan and Anninka to describe Golovlevo, by Arina to describe her son Stepan, by Evprakseiushka and Pavel to refer to Porfirii.

Each member of the Golovlev family is a (distorted) reflection of another one.[61] They all fail to connect with others, and the world, are left utterly alone, and are eventually killed, suffocated by the overabundance of physical and mental space around them. This happens first to Stepan, then to Vladimir Mikhailovich, the patriarch; followed by Pavel, the younger generation, sons and nieces; Arina; and, finally, Iudushka himself. In its ineluctability, each death in the novel is a non-event in the Lotmanian sense. Lotman defines an event is something that happened, even though it might *not* have happened (285). Inaction followed by death is inevitable in the narrative, and thus it does not constitute an event. Emptiness and death dominate the story and the only question is who the next victim will be. On the other hand, however, there are moments within these repetitive cycles in which every character seems to be *on the brink* of understanding, ready to take action and change their gloomy fate. This happens at moments when they are *almost* able to read Iudushka. In the end, however, they always fall short.[62] It is this succession of near misses that gives the plot its movement forward, alternating moments of hope with moments of anxiety. I argue that the unique appeal of this novel is rooted in the exciting alternation between anxiety and hope, as they relate to Porfirii's illegibility.

The commingling of anxiety and hope finds resonance in Lauren Berlant's theory of "cruel optimism." While Berlant's book is firmly rooted in the contemporary historical moment, many of her claims and theoretical frameworks can help us make sense of how hope, or optimism, works in *The Golovlevs.* Saltykov found the Russian Realist novel, particularly when it centered around the family, unsatisfactory (Foote 5, Kramer 457) and parodied it in *The Golovlevs* (Todd 102-103).[63] Berlant identifies an illusory, cruel hope for the "good life" in contemporary society that interestingly parallels Saltykov's frustration and parodying of the utopian hope for a good family life for the gentry. Berlant's definition of the *impasse* that sets in after the "good life" dream has become unachievable mirrors the oppressive *impasse* that Saltykov creates in his anti-family novel. In *The Golovlevs*, time passes only in abstract terms, while the characters are in fact stuck in an infinite repetition of familiar patterns. The narrative, however, keeps creating the hope towards the possibility of breaking the pattern and achieving the "good life," or, in nineteenth-century Russian terms, Aksakov's dream of gentry family life in the countryside. In *The Golovlevs*, Saltykov creates a world of futile immobility and affective lack, while at the same time he also creates opportunities for cruel optimism, which the reader holds on to despite the repetitive experiences of anti-climax (or non-events). Saltykov pushes against traditional family novels by showing us that the final product of the Russian family, Iudushka, has lost all feeling, has become an affective void, and is therefore illegible to everyone around him.[64] The other characters' incapacity to read him represents the source of their ruin. Their illiteracy, or his illegibility, maintain the *status quo*, or *impasse*, which means more emptiness and death. By offering his characters (and the reader) the illusory hope to read Iudushka, however, Saltykov uses cruel optimism to parody his contemporaries' dream of the "good life." It is cruel optimism to believe that these characters can leave the institution (the family) that keeps them trapped and read their way out. *The Golovlevs* manages to keep our (and the characters') anxious hopes –or cruel optimism– alive chapter after chapter, despite presenting us repeatedly with bitter disappointments, non-events, and a continuous cycle of sterility and death.

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[61] Todd commented on how these *retours des personages* help convey the sense of the Golovlevs futile, immobile existence (92).

[62] In his discussion of the anti-heroic in the novel, Todd notes how there is a possibility within the world of the novel for a different life. He considers the dim realizations the characters are given as challenges, even if parodic ones, which make them at least partially responsible for their behavior (95-96).

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[63] A longer discussion of Saltykov's discontent with the family structure as well as the family novel can be found in El'sberg *Stil Shchedrina* Part IV.

[64] The themes of degeneration in the gentry family as they appear in the novel have been explored extensively in Soviet as well as Western scholarship (Foote 7-11). In recent scholarship, most notably Daniel Beer and Riccardo Nicolosi have explored this topic elegantly and rigorously. More traditionally grotesque aspects of it have also been examined at length (Nikolaev Satira, Bushmin Isskustvo satiry, Volosklov). The recurrence of themes such as corpses and death has been observed (El'sberg Saltykov); Nikolaev, Kramer and Todd offer insightful discussions on the themes of animality, feeding and food.

Iudushka as Affective Void

Iudushka's appeal for the reader relies in part on his grotesque comedy. He is comic and terrifying.[65] On the other hand, his lack of feelings has led many critics to veer towards a more pathological, rather than comedic reading. He has been diagnosed with many different psychiatric ailments that revolve around a faulty affectivity. Foote describes Iudushka as having no "inner being," and "no human impulses" (17); Pokusaev claims that Porfirii has no "normal" feelings (48-49); Nikolaev calls him a "moral monster" (*Smekh* 97); Arsenev diagnoses him with "monomania" (193), and calls him a "pathological case" (21); Bushmin calls him a "predator sadist" (*Saltykov* 159); Bitsilli calls him an "idiot" in the "literal sense" and then proceeds to clarify that "an 'idiot' is a person who exists spiritually 'in his own world,' outside the 'environment,' in empty space, that is, not a person" (634). As we have seen in Chapter 1, a lack of emotional reciprocity was considered a sign of madness by early Russian psychiatry too, as well as one of the things that made mentally ill patients illegible and that created the need for psychiatrists to build a bridge between the sane and the insane. Self-centeredness was perceived as pathological at least partly because it creates discomfort. If this affective void isn't "translated" into a symptom of mental illness by an expert, it simply remains an unbridgeable divide between the ill and the healthy. While readers and critics might delight in his wickedness because of their distance, Porfirii's family is unsettled and confused by his affective illegibility.

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[65] Thomson identifies the commingling of comic and terrifying as one of the essential features of the grotesque (20). Critics have noted how in Iudushka laughter and terror are indissolubly intermingled (Mikhailovskii 444, Nikolaev *Smekh* 113). What A.M. Zhemchuzhnikov, in a letter to Saltykov, says about Iudushka is a textbook definition of the comic and terrifying quality of the grotesque: "In this character there is a fantastic, artful combination of almost ludicrous comedy and deep tragedy. These two, apparently opposite, elements are inseparable in him. You would like to keep laughing. But you cannot; you cannot even laugh gloomily; he is awful. Yet it is also impossible to treat him with moral indignation or anger because he is undeniably comical, especially when he performs the most, in his opinion, moral deeds" (qtd. in Iakovlevo 349).

Iudushka has moved into the realm of pure word and thought (even though they are empty, *pusto*slovie and *pusto*mysl*'*) leaving feeling behind. In the final confrontation with his son Petia, after Iudushka refuses to lend him the money that would prevent him from being sent to Siberia, Petia tries to appeal to his father's feelings, without realizing that he is doomed to fail: "Listen! Please, I am begging you! If there is even a drop of feeling left in you…" (Послушайте! наконец, я прошу вас! ежели у вас есть хоть капля чувства... PSS 13:128). But not only is there no feeling *left* in Porfirii, there has never been any to begin with. The narrator explains: "For him existed neither pain, nor joy, nor hate, nor love. The whole world in his eyes was a tomb, which could serve only as an occasion for never-ending empty verbiage" (Для него не существует ни горя, ни радости, ни ненависти, ни любви. Весь мир, в его глазах, есть гроб, могущий служить лишь поводом для бесконечного пустословия, PSS 13:119). In addition to his natural disposition, Iudushka seeks indifference; he cultivates it (PSS 13:139). Petia's mistake of believing that behind Iudushka's self-interest he could find a reserve of hidden, perhaps buried emotions, is the same mistake that every other character around Porfirii makes. It is an understandable mistake, because this complete lack of feeling is uncommon, and when we encounter it, we perceive it as abnormal and disconcerting. Porfirii's affective void creates a screen of illegibility that nobody in the novel can see through.

On the surface, Porfirii is a hypocrite, in other words, he performs appropriate feelings without feeling them.[66] But Iudushka is not masking a secret intention or desire with his hypocrisy; he is masking a void. He covers the void with empty verbiage and then uses language to dominate others.[67] One of the reasons why this is so effective is that there's nothing hidden behind his empty talk. That's why the characters around him cannot read him or react to him appropriately. Even his greed lives in the realm of idle, or empty thought (*pustomysl'*), and his desire for accumulation is nothing more than a feverish fantasy, rather than true avarice or greed. Foote comments that "Porfirii's hypocrisy, his empty verbiage, his empty rituals are all outward forms that conceal the moral vacuum within him. …He has no vision, no grand scheme, no final purpose" (18). I argue that Iudushka is hiding an affective, rather than moral, vacuum. It is the lack of feelings, rather than the lack of a moral compass, that drives him to act amorally, or rather, to act without any concern for the people who surround him. His complete lack of feeling is so unexpected that characters around him don't know how to react to it. Saltykov famously goes into a long digression explaining the difference between French hypocrisy and Russian "pointless lying." He concludes the digression by saying: "I think, however, that if hypocrisy can inspire indignation and fear, pointless lying can elicit annoyance and disgust" (Думаю, однако ж, что если лицемерие может внушить негодование и страх, то беспредметное лганье способно возбудить докуку и омерзение, PSS 13:103). According to Saltykov, Russian hypocrisy is more formless than its French counterpart because Russian society at the time was lacking some of the strong foundations that French society possessed. Thus, it was more suited to cause ugly feelings, such as annoyance and disgust, rather than fear and anger. By the narrator's own admission, what Iudushka does is bound to elicit confusing, bothersome feelings in the characters around him. These indefinite feelings contribute to the character's illegibility.

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[66] Gippius examines the theatrical aspect of all the gestures performed by Iudushka (322).

[67] The use of language in *The Golovlevs,* and Porfirii's language in particular, have been examined extensively in Bondarev (18-23), El'sberg *Stil Shchedrina,* Part II, El'sberg *Saltykov* (409), Kuznetsova (111-18), and Pokusaev (40-42).

The characters around Porfirii cannot penetrate through the screen of empty talk to see the full expanse of his affective abyss, in other words, he is affectively illegible. The other Golovlevs only get glimpses of the void, and often these glimpses are shrouded in mystery. His birth, for example, is announced by a prophecy by the holy fool Porfirii-the-somewhat-blessed.[68] After crowing three times the holy fool shouts: "Rooster, rooster! Sharp little claw-ster! The rooster will squeal, in danger the hen will feel; the hen goes cluck-cluck-cluck, but alas too late!" (Петушок, петушок! востер ноготок! Петух кричит, наседке грозит; наседка — кудах-тах-тах, да поздно будет! PSS 13:16). The first part of the prophecy comes true, and three days later a boy is born. Nobody, however, can make sense of the second half of the prophecy. Later in the novel, we will see the hen, Arina, curse Porfirii, cluck-cluck-cluck, but it will indeed be too late. The genre of the prophecy is a purposely obscure one, characterized by (partial or total) illegibility. Moreover, it adds an element of almost supernatural ineluctability to the story. Because the second half of the prophecy cannot be interpreted, or read, however, Arina sets it aside and moves on. The first moment of illegibility for Porfirii thus comes even before his birth. The mystery surrounding his birth, and the vaguely menacing tone of the prophecy are the first elements of anxiety associated with being unable to read Porfirii.

Arina Golovleva

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[68] Todd analyzes the anti-heroic value of the ironic prophecy in "The Anti-Hero of a Thousand Faces" (97). The translation of "Порфиша-блаженненький" as "Porfirii-the-somewhat-blessed" is also Todd's.

The Golovlev matriarch's narrative arc represents an exemplary case of the pattern of anxiety and hope, or cruel optimism, in the novel, if only because she and Iudushka are two of the only characters who survive for multiple episodes/chapters.[69] Arina Petrovna is presented as a formidable woman. One of her talents, which is highlighted in the very beginning of the story, is her almost supernatural ability to read people, and knowing whether they are lying to her. It is implied that this talent has played an essential role in putting her in the position she is in, having multiplied the Golovlev fortune and now owning almost four thousand souls. She can tell when her servants are not being truthful, and that's for example how she discovers that her eldest son Stepan lost his Moscow house, which she had gifted him in hopes of forever getting rid of him. In the same way, she can read all her children too. Her son Pavel leads an inane existence, and likes to sit in a corner and daydream, never saying a word. Despite his silence, Arina declares that she can see right through him (PSS 13:17). Pavel hides not an affective void, but just incapacity for action: "He was a gloomy man, but behind his gloom hid only the absence of action – and nothing more" (Это был человек угрюмый, но за его угрюмостью скрывалось отсутствие поступков — и ничего больше, PSS 13:17). While Pavel and Stepan are both lost in an empty fantasy world, they still experience feelings: hatred, hope, and, in Stepan's case, even genuine admiration for his mother. These feelings make them legible to others and allow Arina to dominate them.

With her son Porfirii, however, her powers seem to disappear. Arina cannot see past the surface. She complains: "Even I cannot understand what goes on beyond those eyes…" (И сама понять не могу, что у него за глаза такие… PSS 13:15). She cannot understand that behind Porfirii's eyes lies the most complete affective void. Iudushka's illegibility means that characters, even his mighty mother, are pushed to act in erratic, irrational ways around him: “And involuntarily [Arina’s] hand looked for the best morsel to put in her loving son’s dish, despite the fact that one look from that son evoked in her heart murky anxiety about something mysterious, evil” (И невольно рука ее искала лучшего куска на блюде, чтоб передать его ласковому сыну, несмотря на то, что один вид этого сына поднимал в ее сердце смутную тревогу чего-то загадочного, недоброго, PSS 13:16). Just as in the prophecy that announced his birth, when Iudushka is a child, he is already characterized by opacity and the sense that he brings on something (что-то) both evil and almost supernaturally inescapable, which forces the characters around him (невольно) to act in ways they would not otherwise act.

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[69] Anninka, the niece, and Evprakseiushka, the housekeeper/mistress are the two other longest-lived characters, featured prominently in two and three chapters respectively.

During Iudushka’s adulthood and before Arina’s death as an indigent, lonely old woman, there are three main events that mark the cruel optimism that she might overcome the novel’s impasse. The first happens in “Family Court.” At the beginning of this chapter, Arina is informed by a servant that her eldest son Stepan has lost the house she had bought for him in Moscow. We can sense that this accident is serious and will bear serious consequences for everyone involved. There is a lot of build up towards a climactic resolution of the problem. The question seems to be whether it will be a final break between mother and son or, on the contrary, a prodigal-son moment of forgiveness. Arina seems to be about to make a significant decision and in this process struggles to make sense of her feelings:

> Arina Petrovna was sitting in the bedroom and could not come to herself. Something stirred inside her, something she could not well account for. Was some miraculously appeared pity at play here, for this odious man, who was, after all, still her son? Or was it just a feeling of lèse-majesté? The most experienced psychologist could not have

> determined which one: to such an extent all feelings and sensations in her were mixing and quickly switching places.
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> Арина Петровна сидела в спальной и не могла прийти в себя. Что-то такое шевелилось у нее внутри, в чем она не могла отдать себе ясного отчета. Участвовала ли тут каким-то чудом явившаяся жалость к постылому, но все-таки сыну или говорило одно нагое чувство оскорбленного самовластия — этого не мог бы определить самый опытный психолог: до такой степени перепутывались и быстро сменялись в ней все чувства и ощущения. (PSS 13:19)

What is born of this highly complex emotional battle, however, is rather anticlimactic. Arina delays the moment of decision by summoning a family court with her two other sons, Porfirii and Pavel. For the first time, Porfirii is called upon to settle a matter that is of emotional, rather than rational, nature. For the time being, an impasse is established, with Arina and Stepan at Golovlevo, waiting. As Stepan is forced to live alone in a couple of small rooms in the annex, eating scraps from the kitchen, he grows more and more expectant of the upcoming family court, sure that it will change his situation, one way or another. Once the family court is in session, the usually laconic Pavel uncharacteristically speaks up. What he says is rather disjointed and resembles a prophecy, both in its obscurity and its menacing tone: "Clearly, he's guilty… rip him to pieces… crush him in a mortar… what comes next is clear… what is it to me!" (Известно, виноват... на куски рвать... в ступе истолочь... вперед известно... мне что ж! PSS 13:40). Like the prophecy uttered by Porfirii-the-somewhat-blessed, Pavel's statement emphasizes the ineluctability of the Golovlevs' fate.[70]

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[70] Todd notes: "In this world of unmitigated gloom, every fear, bad dream, or ominous prediction is realized" (92).

Yet the hope for change is supported for a moment by the fact that Arina initially wants to give Stepan another "morsel," a small estate where he can go live. Perhaps all the prophecies are mistaken after all. Then Porfirii intervenes. Porfirii advises against the "compassionate" approach and says: "I don't know… Maybe I don't have such generosity in me… such, so to speak, motherly feeling" (Не знаю... Может быть, во мне нет этого великодушия... этого, так сказать, материнского чувства... PSS 13: 41). Porfirii covers up his affective void by implying that while he might not possess "motherly feelings," he might experience other feelings. Arina cannot use her usual powers to "see through" this misrepresentation. Iudushka convinces her to have Stepan renounce all rights to his inheritance. Moreover, he proposes leaving him alone in the annex to live out the rest of his days. When Arina hears Porfirii's proposition, she worries only about the fact that after her death it will be left up to Porfirii to take care of Stepan. Influenced by Porfirii, Arina misplaces her anxiety. It is as if Iudushka's empty verbiage had the power to obscure not only himself, but an entire situation. Because of his illegibility he draws all the attention onto himself and Arina forgets to think about the consequences of what he is suggesting for Stepan. She is resistant at first but then she reflects: "Is he really such a bloodsucker that he will leave his own brother out on the street?" (Неужто он в самом деле такой кровопивец, что брата родного на улицу выгонит? PSS 13:43). While Arina's whole reasoning is focused on trying -and failing- to read Porfirii, the simpleton Stepan is completely forgotten. Arina condemns Stepan to death not because of a lack of "motherly feeling," but rather because she misreads Iudushka and thus is incapable of breaking the impasse. After what was presented as the main conflict of this episode, instead of a resolution we have another anticlimactic delay. Besides depriving Stepan of his inheritance, which has no concrete effect on him, after the "family court" nothing changes. The Stepan problem is set aside and nearly forgotten. Arina has no idea of what's happening to her son afterwards. Not only is Stepan forgotten, but so is the possibility for change: "The accidental glimpse of feeling that fleeted through her during her conversation with the bloodsucker Porfirii was immediately extinguished, so that she didn't even notice it" (Случайный проблеск чувства, мелькнувший было в разговоре с кровопивцем Порфишкой, погас мгновенно, так что она и не заметила, PSS 13:50). Our hope has been smothered by the Golovlev impasse. Rather than achieving a solution, problems are set aside and ignored. After the dream of the good life has been betrayed, we are forced to live in the current state of inertia. Being set aside at Golovlevo means utter solitude, debasement, and heavy drinking. After the family court, the narrator masterfully describes the dissolution process in Stepan's mind before his death, with no one but the reader to witness it.

The second moment on the brink of understanding for Arina comes after her son Pavel's death. Porfirii inherits everything, while Arina is left with nothing. The matriarch is getting ready to move to her orphaned granddaughters' estate, Pogorelko, the only piece of property that still rightfully belongs to her, as their guardian. As Iudushka delays by prolonging the funeral lunch to insufferable lengths, the matriarch has another moment of *almost* clarity: "It was as if the wool had been lifted from her eyes, and this comedy, the repetition of which she had grown accustomed to from an early age, *in which she herself had always participated*, suddenly seemed to her completely new, never seen before" (Как будто какой-то свет пролился у ней перед глазами, и вся эта комедия, к повторению которой она с малолетства привыкла, *в которой сама всегда участвовала*, вдруг показалась ей совсем новою, невиданною, PSS 13:88, my emphasis). At this point, we hope that Arina will take action. In the opening of this chapter, we learned that the nefarious bloodsucker Porfirii might have an Achilles' heel after all: he is terrified of his mother's curse (cluck-cluck-cluck) and attributes to this possible event powers of disproportionate magnitude. When Arina starts thinking about cursing him, the reader experiences the hope that Iudushka might get his comeuppance. If Porfirii can experience real fear, this might cause an event, something that will break the impasse. The spark of conscience regarding her role in this "comedy," however, passes and it is too brief to make any lasting impression. After the funeral lunch, the three women depart and once again, nothing happens. Pavel is dead, a non-event, and Arina and the girls go bury themselves further into the countryside, as Arina feebly tries to distance herself from her poisonous son Porfirii. Again, it is avoidance rather than a resolution that concludes the sequence, and the impasse continues. After the girls leave Pogorelko to become provincial actresses, Arina is left completely alone. She begins to go down a path not too dissimilar to Stepan's. To save herself, she slowly forgets her negative feelings towards Iudushka, the disgust she felt for him at Pavel's funeral, and reconciles with him. The two of them spend the next five years in static harmony at Golovlevo.

The third and final moment on the brink of understanding happens when Petia, one of Iudushka's sons, comes back home to ask for three thousand rubles that he stole and gambled away so that he won't be sent to Siberia. After Iudushka refuses him the money, Petia accuses his father of being a murderer and recounts the story of his brother Volodia, and how Porfirii's behavior towards him directly led to his suicide. (Another non-event, which, like Liubinka's suicide, happens behind the scenes). Arina is sitting there and silently witnessing the exchange between father and son. "And it seemed to her that she was still listening to the same familiar story, which began a long time ago, but she could not remember when. The story had already ended, yet here it was again, no, no, all of a sudden it reopened on the same exact page" (И сдается ей, что она все ту же знакомую повесть слышит, которая давно, и не запомнит она когда, началась. Закрылась было совсем эта повесть, да вот и опять, нет-нет, возьмет да и раскроется на той же странице, PSS 13:118). For the first time following an epiphany, Arina tries to take action. As Petia is about to leave to face exile and probable death, she finally decides to curse Porfirii. This installment ends with a cliffhanger, as Arina screams at Porfirii: "I c-c-uuurse you!" (Прро-кли-ннааааю! PSS 13:134). We are left with the hope that Porfirii's nefarious power over the family will finally be dispelled. Perhaps Petia will be saved too? The next installment, however, begins – anticlimactically– with Iudushka conducting business as usual. That's how the reader realizes that the curse had no effect. Even here Arina misread Iudushka. Fear is a feeling, and Iudushka is immune to it. The only person affected as a matter of fact is Arina, who retires back to Pogorelko and slowly lets herself die in solitude.

The progression of these three episodes is essential in fostering our hope. Each moment of clarity is more intense than the previous ones, each time Arina seems closer to reading Iudushka and breaking the impasse. The first attempt to read Iudushka, during the family court, is too brief to even be remembered, the second, after Pavel's funeral, leads Arina to consider cursing him. In the end, however, she just moves to Pogorelko and cuts her ties with him for a period. The third and final one, involving Porfirii's sons, that is, a whole new generation of Golovlevs who are victims of the same fate as the older generation, emphasizes how both Arina, and the reader, have been reading this story over and over again. This final attempt at reading Iudushka (there really is no drop of feeling left in him…) leads to a curse, a highly anticipated, and hoped for, event in the novel. But even the curse, cluck-cluck-cluck, alas is too late: it reveals itself to be an anti-climax, an action incapable of breaking the impasse. Within the repetition of the same plot pattern, the narrator has given us more and more reasons to be optimistic, to hope that this time something will change. The prophecy had been definitive in its obscurity, however, and it was cruel optimism to believe that something could have changed.

Arina Petrovna's death returns to the theme of illegibility. Once a formidable woman who could read people and situations and made a fortune out of this skill, she is now poor and alone, and her family has slowly died around her. Only her bloodsucking son is left by her side: "Mommy dear! Bless me!" he begs her. "But Arina Petrovna wasn't listening. Her eyes were open and lusterless, she was looking into space, as if she were trying to understand something but could not grasp it. (—Маменька! друг мой! благословите! Но Арина Петровна не слыхала. Открытые глаза ее тускло смотрели в пространство, словно она старалась что-то понять и не понимала, PSS 13: 138). She dies without being able to make sense of what happened to her. Having missed all her opportunities for change, she is condemned to simply repeat the familiar script. It was cruel optimism to think that she could have used her power to change this narrative of degeneration and the ineluctable fate that she is trapped in.

Pavel Golovlev

The pattern of resolution and anticlimax is not limited to Arina. An interesting example of how this pattern applies to another character is offered by Pavel's death, where Porfirii leaves the realm of anxiety to step into pure terror. There are many dark and hopeless moments in the novel,[71] but Porfirii approaching Pavel's deathbed is one of the most terrifying ones. Once again, it would seem as if everything were in place to break the impasse. The chapter opens with a doctor declaring Pavel has almost drunk himself to death and has but a few days left to live. If Pavel dies without a will, his estate and capital by law will pass to Porfirii, and Arina and the orphans will be left with almost nothing. (Inaction always means destruction for the Golovlevs). Arina's orphaned granddaughters, Anninka and Liubinka, are crying at the prospect of being left at Iudushka's mercy. Porfirii has infiltrated his brother's household by placing Ulita, a cunning housemaid loyal to him, at Pavel's service. Starting from this rather desperate setting, suddenly a chance emerges for Arina and Pavel to come together and ally against the bloodsucker Porfirii. Arina tries to take a desperate step and goes to talk to Pavel, hoping to overcome their mutual dislike. The pace and tone of the narrative change. There might be an event on the horizon. As in any good suspense narrative, Arina manages to bypass Porfirii's servant, who is keeping guard at Pavel's door, and get some time alone with him. At this point we expect a big break, a resolution. This scene has all the characteristics of a redemption moment, with Arina and Pavel coming together against Porfirii and ruining his plans. [72] Since the first chapter, Iudushka has condemned his brother Stepan to death and expropriated his mother's estate (taking advantage of her vague anxieties surrounding the emancipation of the serfs). It seems unlikely that they will underestimate him again. What is more, Pavel burns with hatred for his brother and spends a big portion of his time lost in fantasies of Iudushka's demise. The mounting anxiety as to what Porfirii will do if Arina and Pavel do not reach an agreement, as well as the hope that they will unite against a common enemy, gives the narrative momentum. Mother and son, however, cannot come to an understanding. The deathbed scene becomes just another missed opportunity and anti-climax. Once again, despite being on the brink of understanding, Pavel misreads Iudushka and lets things continue as they are, which condemns him to his ultimate destruction.

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[71] "The gloomiest in all Russian literature," according to D.S. Mirsky (281).

After Arina leaves, it is Iudushka's turn to show up a Pavel's deathbed. What follows could be an excerpt from a gothic horror story. For Pavel, Iudushka becomes a full-fledge monster.

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[72] There are many exemplary deathbed scenes in nineteenth-century literature that end with some climactic resolution. To mention just a couple, Pierre at his father's deathbed in Tolstoy's *War and Peace;* or Mary Garth at Featherstone's deathbed refusing to help him change his will, which will ultimately lead to her happy marriage to Fred, in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (translated into Russian in 1872 in two editions and then again in 1873).

Porfirii emerges from the shadows like a hallucination and hovers over his brother's bed like a vampire: "It was horrifying. It seemed to Pavel Vladimirych that he was lying in a coffin, still alive, lying there as if fettered, in a lethargic dream, unable to move a single limb; and listening to the bloodsucker desecrating his body" (Это было ужасно. Павлу Владимирычу почудилось, что он заживо уложен в гроб, что он лежит словно скованный, в летаргическом сне, не может ни одним членом пошевельнуть и выслушивает, как кровопивец ругается над телом его, PSS 13:79). Pavel screams in fear but no one hears him. After our hopes for a different turn of events are crushed, we are confronted not only with the anxiety provoked by Porfirii's lack of feelings (what will happen to Arina and the orphans? What will Iudushka do with his brother's property?), but also with a terrifying embodiment of the bloodsucking monster inside Iudushka. Because of a lack of resolution in the conversation with Arina, Pavel is left to be consumed not only by his own mind and heavy drinking, but also by a literal vampire, personified by his brother. Porfirii is a void that inevitably sucks everyone in, despite their disgust, fear and attempts at resisting. If Porfirii always appeared as this embodied bloodsucking monster, his character would be less effective. Because his behavior and countenance most of the time elicit anxiety and disgust rather than fear, this moment becomes memorable: it changes the pace and affective tone of the narrative, offering variation within the repetition. Here hope is not followed by a return to the anti-climactic, slow-burning anxiety that characterized Arina's arc, but rather by a fear-driven, fast paced episode.

Porfirii Golovlev

Some things seem to change in the last two chapters, "Escheated" and "The Reckoning." The common understanding of Porfirii's demise is that it begins after Arina's death, when he is left completely alone and the “dust” that he used to pour onto everyone around him has nowhere to go and fills him up instead.[73] The push towards his ruin first comes from an unexpected source: Evprakseiushka, Iudushka’s housekeeper and mistress. In “Escheated,” Evprakseiushka gives us something that up until this point we had only hoped for: an event. Her actions are the only ones that threaten to disrupt the impasse. After living peacefully with Porfirii for quite some time and not giving much thought to her situation, things change for the housekeeper. Iudushka takes their illegitimate son away from her just hours after his birth and condemns the newborn to almost certain death by sending him to a foundlings’ home. Afterwards, something starts stirring inside Evprakseiushka. Her relative indifference and contentedness are interrupted, and she starts hating Porfirii. “Явилась ненависть, желание досадить, изгадить жизнь, извести” (She started to feel hatred, a desire to annoy him, make his life miserable, torment him). This is a familiar place that many other characters have lived through. For Evprakseiushka, however, this hatred leads to action, and, what is more, effective action: “началась несноснейшая из всех войн — война придирок, поддразниваний, мелких уколов” (the most insufferable of all wars began - a war of nagging, teasing, petty stabs). Interestingly, it is not a big climactic moment, such as a curse, that changes the course of the narrative, but exactly the opposite: a collection of small, insignificant stabs that add up to a resolution of sorts. Evprakseiushka is the only one who can read Porfirii correctly and thus can embark on a successful campaign against him. She does not appeal to his feelings, as father or lover, she does not curse him (counting on him feeling fear). She understands (or intuits) that he is an affective void, that he is not masking anything with his empty verbiage and empty rituals. That’s why in her “war” she targets the surface level rather than his inner being:

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[73] This view was expressed by Saltykov himself in a letter to Nekrasov on April 6th (18th) 1876 (PSS 18, 2:284).

“Но именно только такая война и могла сломить Порфирия Владимирыча” (But it was precisely such a war, which could break Porfirii Vladimirych; PSS 13:203). By attacking him on the only level that exists, the surface level, she disrupts the impasse, at least as far as she is concerned. For a summer, she achieves something none of the Golovlevs could: she is happy and carefree. Moreover, by the end of the novel she is neither dead nor on death’s door. This development, on the background of the isolation and death at Golovlevo, is an event. Crucially, Evprakseiushka is the only central character who never shared the dream of a good gentry life, and she is the only one who avoids getting ensnared in the Golovlev death spiral. Porfirii, on the other hand, is forced to retreat deeper into the Golovlev fantasy world, which is in his case is an excess of dusty, empty thoughts, and this is the beginning of the end for him.

In addition to Evprakseiushka’s rebellion throwing a wrench in the perfectly oiled machine of Porfirii’s emotionally empty world, there are moments when Iudushka seems to be on the brink of understanding, or reading, himself. In those moments, feelings start to surface, and he punctually fights against them to regain his status of impasse and lack of feelings. As in Arina’s case, there are three missed opportunities for change. The first moment occurs in “Family Scores,” during Iudushka’s confrontation with Petia. His son’s return home causes some stirring inside Porfirii that at first cannot be assuaged by the usual empty talk. When Petia accuses him of having caused the death of his other son, Volodia, however, Porfirii almost jumps at his son’s throat. In the end, he manages an “in-human exertion” (нечеловеческое усилие) on himself to control his emotions and avoids feeling angry (PSS 13:132). After he regains his self-control, any trace of lucidity disappears too, and Porfirii is back behind his wall of empty language and hypocrisy.

The second moment is found in “Illicit Family Joys,” when it first comes to light that Evprakseiushka is pregnant, and that they conceived during a period of fasting. Iudushka experiences something he had never experienced before: feelings. “And so, when ... it finally became clear that he had been caught, he was taken over by anguish. He started walking around the room, not thinking about anything, but only feeling that inside of him there was squelching and trembling. ...It was a completely new burden, which for the first time in his life arrested his empty thinking” (И вот, когда … делалось, наконец, ясным, что он пойман,— на него нападала тоска. Он принимался ходить по комнате, ни об чем не думая, а только ощущая, что внутри у него сосет и дрожит. … Это была совсем новая узда, которую в первый раз в жизни узнало его праздномыслие, PSS 13:185). While the deaths of everyone around him hadn’t affected him, he cannot shake off the fact that he has been caught in the sin of “fornication” (прелюбодеяние). In Porfirii’s reasoning, in the cases of the deaths, there was no proof against him, but here there is very physical evidence that cannot be hidden. As Iudushka feels anguish for the first time, this affect is reflected in unpleasant and unusual bodily symptoms. For the first time, he is not *thinking* about anything, he is *feeling* unpleasant sensations inside. He is reeling because for the first time he is on the brink of feeling shame.

Saltykov valued shame (Mysliakov 132-39). When a state of emotional isolation ends, we feel shame: “It is a shame directed at the evidence we come to remember later as a telling revelation to others that reciprocity had ceased to exist in our eyes” (Fisher 68). Mental patients were reported to feel shame in their moments of lucidity because they understood how they had made themselves alien to everyone else. Shame is a cornerstone of emotional and societal reciprocity, and therefore it was perceived as a symptom of health by early Russian psychiatry. Shame is the only emotion that could bring Iudushka back from the emotional gulf that separates him from the other characters.[74] His lack of shame throughout the novel was representative of his lack of affective reciprocity and characterized him as an affective void. Porfirii for most of the novel has been immune to self-reflection. He is illegible to the other characters and to himself, and there is no attempt to read himself. The emptiness is totalizing. Yet when he starts to experience anguish as a precursor of shame, the hope emerges that he will be forced to look inside and read himself, leading to a change and perhaps a break in the impasse. But the narrator warns us that Iudushka has powerful tools at his disposal to avoid feeling at all costs: "But it raises the question: will Iudushka go further along this path, or will his empty thoughts come to his rescue as usual and present him with a new loophole, thanks to which he will manage, as he always does, to get away with murder?" (Но представлялся вопрос: пойдет ли Иудушка дальше по этому пути, или же пустомыслие и тут сослужит ему обычную службу и представит новую лазейку, благодаря которой он, как и всегда, успеет выйти сухим из воды? PSS 13:185-86). In other words, will an event manifest itself through this reading and change the course of the plot or will the pattern repeat itself unvaried, leading to another death? The hope to see Iudushka break the impasse only increases the anxiety he provokes when he manages to extricate himself from shame and return to his state of complete lack of feelings. For the rest of the pregnancy, the impasse is maintained and there is anxiety regarding who the next victim of the Golovlev narrative spiral will be. What follows is indeed another death: that of his newborn Volodia.

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[74] Arsenev even argues that at the end we feel something akin to pity for Iudushka (196).

Volodia's birth represents the third moment on the brink of understanding. When the baby is born, characters around him expect Iudushka to be struck by feelings of love, or perhaps love mixed with shame, which will force him to break the impasse. Porfirii, however, immediately sends him away to a foundling home and does not take on any responsibility.[75] This leads Ulita, a servant without scruples, who has been depicted as complicit in many nefarious acts before, to say that he had crossed a line and that in that moment he resembled Satan himself (PSS 13:198). The same monster that haunted Pavel on his deathbed comes back again to kill a newborn baby. Again, he kills through avoidance, rather than action, the baby is simply sent away and he never worries about him again.

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[75] This episode has been brilliantly analyzed by Todd, who points us to a strikingly similar passage in Rousseau's *Confessions* (101).

The final moment on the brink of understanding results in Porfirii's death. Iudushka, prodded by his niece Anninka's accusations of being personally responsible for the deaths of everyone in the family, gets close to insight, or reading himself, even though it happens amid a drunken haze. The final push to legibility, to opening his eyes to what happened, given by Anninka, has come too late: "And suddenly a terrible truth illuminated his conscience, but it illuminated it too late, uselessly, at a moment when before his eyes there was nothing but an irrevocable and irreparable fact" (И вдруг ужасная правда осветила его совесть, но осветила поздно, без пользы, уже тогда, когда перед глазами стоял лишь бесповоротный и непоправимый факт, PSS 13:257). Perhaps prodded by this "terrible truth," perhaps by alcohol, Iudushka runs out in the snow to reach his mother's grave, but dies of exposure on the way.[76] Whether Porfirii's final demise was truly motivated by shame is left in vague terms by the narrator: "It is hard to say whether he was conscious of his decision" (PSS 13:261).[77] Thus the final (possible) glimmer of insight on Iudushka's part comes "too late," as the prophecy had predicted and does not break the impasse. The final resolution, or reckoning, is revealed to be nothing more than another Golovlev death, a non-event. In this context, whether or not Iudushka is aware of what he is doing is irrelevant. After his death, the estate is taken over by a new Arina-esque character, a family cousin, and the cycle can begin all over again.

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[76] Like one of Adatov's sons in *Notes of a Doctor* (1847), as he was haunted by the guilt of accidentally drowning one of his sisters.

[77] Todd also notes that the redeeming characteristics of Iudushka's end are ambiguous at best (99-100).

Conclusions

While Iudushka's demise represents an ambiguous moment of redemption, and a continuation of the Golovlev impasse and death spiral, we can find another moment that speaks to the cruel optimism of the novel as a whole. During his confrontation with Petia, in a biblical reversal, Porfirii gives his son stones instead of bread. Was Iudushka aware of the fact that he was giving stones instead of bread? the narrator asks. "Either way, he didn't have anything else, and he gave his stones as the only thing he could have given" (во всяком случае, у него ничего другого не было, и он подавал свой камень, как единственное, что он мог дать, PSS 13:119). This is perhaps the only time in the novel where we see Iudushka not as a perpetrator of disaster and harbinger of death, not as a scary, unfeeling monster, but as a victim, a product of his environment.[78] Here it becomes clear that the dream of a happy gentry family life in itself is misleading, harmful, and destined to betray us. This does not mean that the individuals within this crumbling family structure did not have the possibility of making different choices. *The Golovlevs*' narrative success, however, hinges equally upon the hope created by the opportunity for change they were offered, *and* upon the fact that these particular characters never had a chance of taking those opportunities. In other words, the tension between the anxiety we experience about the impasse continuing, especially around the figure of Iudushka, and the hope that it will instead break, regardless of the conclusions we can draw from it regarding societal or individual responsibility, represents the narrative motor of the novel, its innovative fulcrum, and the source of its success.

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[78] The idea of Iudushka as both victim and perpetrator is also discussed in Nikitina (118) and Pokusaev (45-46).

Chapter Five

Affective Germaphobia and Emotional Illiteracy in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*

You see, gentlemen, it seems to me that you have
no right to question me about my feelings.
You are empowered, I understand that,
but this is my business, my inner business,
an intimate thing.
Mitya – *The Brothers Karamazov*[79]

The elder Zosima, spiritual teacher and moral compass of *The Brothers Karamazov,* imparts some peculiar affective recommendations to his followers: "Брезгливости убегайте тоже и к другим, и к себе: то, что вам кажется внутри себя скверным, уже одним тем, что вы это заметили в себе, очищается. Страха тоже убегайте, хотя страх есть лишь последствие всякой лжи" (And avoid squeamishness, both of others and of yourself: what seems bad to you in yourself is purified by the very fact that you have noticed it in yourself. And avoid fear, though fear is simply the consequence of every lie; PSS 14: 54, BK 47, modified translation).[80] The term *brezglivost'*, which Pevear and Volokhonsky translate as "contempt," but that can also be rendered as "squeamishness," is a protective, negative feeling, which keeps us at a distance from what is repugnant, scary, or contemptible. It protects us from dangerous pollutants, whether they are germs, parasites, or miasma. Interestingly, Zosima draws attention not only to squeamishness that is directed outwards, but also inwards, and he uses the verb "purify" or "purge" (*ochishchat'sia*), which can have medical, in addition to religious, undertones. The path that the elder indicates to overcome squeamishness is acceptance: noticing, i.e., facing what seems emotionally repugnant, is the affective cleanse one needs to purify/purge oneself. In the same way, one should pursue truth rather than lies.[81] That means that accepting uncomfortable truths about oneself is also part of the work involved in vanquishing squeamishness and fear. In what seems like a paradox, Zosima's message thus is to escape grotesque feelings by accepting the affective grotesqueness (ambiguity and out-of-placeness) in oneself and in the world.[82] Or, to use a different metaphor, in order to experience active love for oneself and one's neighbors, one needs to embrace the world's dirt, rather than pining for an idealistic, and ultimately empty, sanitized human society.

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[79] Throughout this chapter, I will refer to Dmitrii and Aleksei Karamazov as Mitya and Alyosha, while for Ivan I will not use the diminutive Vania. This difference in formality of address follows the names that are used in the novel (where Ivan is called by name and patronymic) including in the titles of Books 7, 8, and 11. The diminutives express the viewpoints of the brothers, the narrator, and the townsfolk. Another example of this expression of point of view through naming is how Grushen'ka is referred to with her familiar nickname (until the trial), while Katerina Ivanovna (often) by name and patronymic.

[80] All passages from Dostoevsky are taken from Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie*. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are from Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue*. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, Vintage, 1992. Hereafter citations will appear in parentheses with volume and page number of the Russian, PSS 15: 60, and the English translation as BK and page number, BK 67. My spelling of characters' names in the novel follows Pevear and Volokhonsky's.

In *The Brothers Karamazov,* and in Zosima's recommendation to avoid *brezglivost'*, I argue, among many other things, we can find a subtle defense of Russian dirt (both in the sense of грязь and почва, i.e., soil) against European progress and hyper-sanitization.[83] The novel presents us with four modern individuals, brothers, who have lost their innate memory of faith (Corrigan) and their rootedness in the Russian soil (Hudspith), and need to face the dirt of grotesque feelings and move past it in order to look inside and find the God inside (Corrigan), and regain their *tsel'nost*' (Hudspith).[84] Because they don't have a memory of faith to rely on anymore, nor roots in the native soil, the brothers need to embrace their repulsive insides and suffer through that sight in order to reconstruct a whole self from their fragmented state.[85] Dostoevsky works within an opposition between air (where European ideas, transplanted into an alien, Russian environment, circulate and become: "certain strange 'unfinished' ideas that go around in the air," PSS 28.2: 136) and earth. In this sense, I claim that in the novel, *pochva*, soil, while perhaps dirtier (closer to *griaz'*) in the end turns out to be less dangerous than the infection carried by hyper-sanitized European air.

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[81] Deborah Martinsen gives an extensive analysis of the topic of liars and lying in *The Brothers Karamazov* in her book *Surprised by Shame.*

[82] Greta Matzner Gore makes a similar observation in her book *Dostoevsky and the Ethics of Narrative Form:* "[Dostoevsky] believed that [o]nly by facing our own moral weaknesses can we hope to repair them; only by recognizing what makes us ugly can we begin to cultivate the qualities that make us beautiful" (13).

[83] There is an important semantic difference between just "dirt" грязь, and (Russian) "soil" (почва). Dostoevsky was connected to the *pochvennichestvo* (concept of the soil, from *pochva*) movement, and advocated for it in the journals he edited with his brother, *Time* (*Vremia*) and *Epoch* (*Epokha*). Ellen Chances gives an overview of this connection in her article "Literary Criticism and the Ideology of Pochvennichestvo in Dostoevsky's Thick Journals *Vremia* and *Epokha*." A recent and thorough study of Dostoevsky's tie to the Slavophiles, and, as a consequence, to the *pochvennichestvo* ideology, can be found in Hudspith.

By the 1870s, various eclectic theories existed regarding the origin of epidemic and other diseases.[86] One of the most popular was the miasma theory of disease: the idea that a foul smell carried infection through the air, which traces back to Ancient Greece. The word miasma (миазм/а) was popularized in Russia starting in the 1860s and starts appearing everywhere: in newspapers, magazines, in medical publications and mass literature (Pirogovskaia 60). The idea of fetid smell went beyond the metaphorical: people really believed that unpleasant smells were a direct threat to health (Pirogovskaia 62). At the same time, general questions related to hygiene, sanitation and contagion (санитарно-гигиенические вопросы) were widely discussed not only in medical journals, but also in the general press, including some of the most popular thick journals. A war against dirt (грязь), unsanitariness, and bad smells (дурные запахи) was proclaimed (Pirogovskaia 108-109). This debate, which went along not just medical, but political and cultural lines, contained clearly racist undertones and contrasted European cleanliness and progress with "Asiatic" dirt, backwardness, wildness, amorality (Pirogovskaia 112).[87] Here Dostoevsky draws an important distinction. While miasma, foul air, is dangerous, Russian dirt should not be equivocated with miasma and eliminated in a "European" sanitation effort.[88] One cannot "scrape the earth" without getting dirty. In *The Brothers Karamazov,* Mitya, Ivan, and Alyosha need to come to terms with their squeamishness for the dirt that is inside and outside themselves. On the other hand, Smerdyakov, whose last name literally means “Stinking” and was given to him by Fyodor Pavlovich as a jocular reference to his mother, “Stinking Lizaveta,” represents a fetid miasma: infected by European ideas of progress that travel in the air, he is dominated by squeamishness. He cut off all roots to the native dirt/soil in a desperate attempt to hide the stink of his origins. In this process, he cut off all affective ties with the world as well, becoming an untethered, unfeeling monster toward all but himself.

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[84] Yuri Corrigan and Sarah Hudspith make similar observations regarding modernity and the individual in *The Brothers Karamazov,* but they use different terminology. Hudspith maintains that one of Dostoevsky's main concerns in his work is to examine how individualism has taken hold of the educated classes, so that morally they are not "Russian" anymore. She considers his positive characters as having roots in the native soil, and those who lack that, such as Ivan, to be characterized by a "shattered" *tsel'nost'.* The importance of restoring one's wholeness is to be able to see the *obraz,* the image of God, in others and thus feel compassion for them. In a forthcoming essay called "Dostoevsky's Depth Theology," Corrigan maintains that the modern individual, according to Dostoevsky, has lost their "memory of faith" and is tormented by a fragmented self. What they need to do to overcome the crisis of "modern superficiality" is embark on a painful journey into their own depths, to face the God within, who is not an externalized idol, but an "active, intimate, menacing, and inwardly encroaching divine force" (3).

[85] In the following, I will consider Smerdyakov as a fourth brother, even though, as Carol Apollonio reminds us: "Tempting as it is to state categorically that Smerdiakov is Fedor Pavlovich's illegitimate son, the novel provides no absolute proof" (160). My consideration of Smerdyakov as miasma that could perhaps regain some humanity through brotherly love, however, does not hinge upon his real blood ties to the Karamazov.

[86] Hachten traces the development of germ theory, and all the theories that preceded it, leading up to the golden years of microbiology, which in Russia start in 1885, in her dissertation *Science in the Service of Society*. Other sources on the subject include John Davis, *Russia in the Time of Cholera: Disease Under Romanovs and Soviets;* Charlotte Henze*, Disease, Health Care and Government in Late Imperial Russia,* esp. chapters 1, 2, and 4; John Hutchinson, "Tsarist Russia and the Bacteriological Revolution;" and Mariia Pirogovskaia, *Miazmy, simptomy, uliki.*

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[87] An overview of the racist, homophobic, and scapegoating associations of dirt, from the medieval plague to the current Covid 19 pandemic, can be found in Thomas.

[88] Many works have been granting significant nuance to Dostoevsky's relationship with the science and medicine of his time, as well as with rationalism and materialism. In the philosophical camp, James Scanlan complicates the idea of Dostoevsky's "irrationalism" in *Dostoevsky the Thinker;* Donna Orwin analyzes Dostoevsky's receptivity to certain elements of Cartesian thought in her essay "Did Dostoevsky or Tolstoy Believe in Miracles?" (125–41). As far as Dostoevsky's relationship to the science of his time, and especially rationalism and empiricism, many works address this issue, including Robert Belknap, *The Genesis of* The Brothers Karamazov (34), Liza Knapp, *Annihilation of Inertia*, Harriet Murav, "From Scandalon to Scandal: Ivan's Rebellion Reconsidered," Anna Kaladiouk, "On 'Sticking to the Fact' and 'Understanding Nothing.'" A succinct but informative account of Dostoevsky's interest in science can be found in Knapp, *Annihilation of Inertia* (3). Vladimir Gubailovskii offers a thorough analysis of Dostoevsky's knowledge of geometry and mathematics and how that is exposed in *The Brothers Karamazov* in his essay "Geometriia Dostoevskogo. Tezisy k issledovaniiu."

The challenge of overcoming disgust to commune with one’s neighbor has a long tradition in Orthodox Christianity and in the lives of saints (Miller 11). In *The Brothers Karamazov*, it is illustrated by the story of “John the Merciful,” told by Ivan at the beginning of the chapter “Rebellion,” in which the saint breathes in the foul and festering mouth of a passerby to warm them up (PSS 14: 216). According to Zosima’s teachings, overcoming our grotesque feelings is the key to seeing the humanity (or *obraz*) in others, which allows one to feel empathy for them, and, in turn, to love them.[89] Zosima warns Alyosha that squeamishness is an obstacle for active love, especially for those who are less accustomed to loving their neighbor: “он тоже говорил, что лицо человека часто многим еще неопытным в любви людям мешает любить” (He also says that a man's face often prevents many people, who are as yet inexperienced in love, from loving him; PSS 14: 216, BK 200). Zosima suggests that philosophical or personal disagreements do not create gulfs between people, but rather it all hinges on the unbearable disgust and fear that we feel for our neighbor’s face.[90] When the prosecutor and district attorney interrogate Mitya about his father's murder they ask: "Не согласитесь ли вы объяснить, какие, собственно, принципы руководствовали вас в такой ненависти к личности вашего родителя?" (Would you be willing to explain what principles in fact guided you in this hatred for the person of your parent?; PSS 14:415, BK 391-92). They name jealousy, money… but none of these reasons seem to fully explain Mitya's feelings for his father. Mitya finally tells them: "видите, господа, мне не нравилась его наружность, что-то бесчестное, похвальба и попирание всякой святыни, насмешка и безверие, гадко, гадко" (You see, gentlemen, I did not like his appearance, it was somehow dishonorable, boastful, trampling on all that's holy, mockery and unbelief, loathsome, loathsome; PSS 14: 416-17, BK 393). Ivan's philosophy that everything is permitted states the same idea. It rests on the assumption that we would wish harm to people who affect us emotionally in a negative fashion. We wouldn't abuse someone we disagree with but rather someone who disgusts or scares us. Alyosha inquires whether according to Ivan we are entitled to decide who is worthy of living and who isn't. Ivan replies: "К чему же тут вмешивать решение по достоинству? Этот вопрос всего чаще решается в сердцах людей совсем не на основании достоинств, а по другим причинам, гораздо более натуральным" (But why bring worth into it? The question is most often decided in the hearts of men not at all on the basis of worth, but for quite different reasons, much more natural ones; PSS 14: 131, BK 120). It is disgust and other grotesque feelings, which ultimately can lead us to heinous actions, rather than some philosophical discussion regarding the existence of God.

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[89] Robert Louis Jackson discusses the concept of *obraz* as an aesthetic category in *Dostoevsky’s Quest for Form* (40-70), and *The Art of Dostoevsky* (339); while Murav considers its religious and historical implications (*Holy Foolishness* 130-31). The term is also central for Hudspith’s analysis of Slavophile ideas in Dostoevsky.

[90] The use of disgust to marginalize and harm people or groups is Martha Nussbaum’s main concern in her book *Hiding from Humanity.*

Disgust, fear, and contempt play an essential role in influencing the characters' actions in the novel. Fyodor Pavlovich's first wife almost gives up a considerable part of her estate to her husband "из одного, так сказать, презрения и отвращения к себе, которое он возбуждал в своей супруге ежеминутно своими бесстыдными вымогательствами и вымаливаниями, из одной ее душевной усталости, только чтоб отвязался" (merely because of the contempt and loathing, so to speak, that his shameless extortions and entreaties aroused in his wife, merely because of her emotional exhaustion---anything to be rid of him; PSS 14: 9, BK 5). When Ivan does not seek out Alyosha, despite both being back in town, Alyosha is feeling strangely anxious that the reason behind it might be contempt (PSS 14: 30). Furthermore, how does Grushenka get into her head that she wants to "eat up" Alyosha? She thinks he feels contempt towards her because when they met, he could not look at her directly: "Лицо твое у меня в сердце осталось: «Презирает он меня, думаю, посмотреть даже на меня не захочет»" (Your face stayed in my heart: 'He despises me,' I thought, 'he doesn't even want to look at me'; PSS 14: 320, BK 300). The root of feeling contempt, *prezirat'* (literally to look down to someone) is *zret'*, to see. There is a direct link between the inability to look at someone, and *see* them, in all their most unpleasant features, and feelings such as contempt and disgust, which urge us to look away.[91]

Finally, aside from all their rational reasons to be in competition or in arguments with Fyodor Pavlovich, it is disgust that brings Mitya and Ivan to consider parricide. Ivan secretly wishes for his father's death, even though he does not go as far as waiting outside his window with a pestle. He expresses his disgust for Fyodor Pavlovich openly to Alyosha: "Веришь ли, я ведь здесь обедал сегодня, единственно чтобы не обедать со стариком, до того он мне стал противен" (Would you believe that I dined here today only to avoid dining with the old man, he's become so loathsome to me; PSS 14: 212; BK 197). Mitya explains his feelings to Alyosha in a sentence that is repeated verbatim when the young officer is looking at his father through the window, considering what to do: “Может быть, не убью, а может, убью. Боюсь, что ненавистен он вдруг мне станет своим лицом в ту самую минуту. Ненавижу я его кадык, его нос, его глаза, его бесстыжую насмешку. Личное омерзение чувствую. Вот этого боюсь. Вот и не удержусь...” (Maybe I won't kill him, and maybe I will. I'm afraid that at that moment his face will suddenly become hateful to me. I hate his Adam's apple, his nose, his eyes, his shameless sneer. I feel a personal loathing. I'm afraid of that. I may not be able to help myself…; PSS 14: 112; BK 102-103 and PSS 14: 355, BK 333-34). The elements of Fyodor Pavlovich’s face, *litso,* are broken down into single components, to intensify the disgust Mitya feels for each one, and for the whole. In the next sentence, he talks about the personal, *lichnoe*, disgust he feels for his father. Fyodor Pavlovich’s face, and person, is unbearable to look at, and one cannot look away in contempt. At *that moment*, when Mitya is standing outside his father’s window, his disgust for it almost gets the best of him. “Личное омерзение нарастало нестерпимо. Митя уже не помнил себя и вдруг выхватил медный пестик из кармана...” (The personal loathing was increasing unbearably. Mitya was beside himself, and suddenly he snatched the brass pestle from his pocket…; PSS 14: 355, BK 334). At that moment, all thoughts of Grushenka and the money are gone, and what dominates Mitya is just an unbearable feeling of “personal” disgust. Even Smerdyakov, who had planned the murder down to the very last detail, in the end commits it out of an irresistible feeling: “Почувствовал я это в ту минуту, только уж жажда эта меня всего захватила, ажио дух занялся” (I felt it at that moment, only this desire got such a hold on me, it even took my breath away; PSS 15:64, BK 533).

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[91] Dostoevsky on another occasion expressed himself against "looking away:" Turgenev wrote an essay, "The Execution of Troppmann" (*Kazn' Tropmana*) where he described having to turn away at the fated moment of the execution. Dostoevsky found this to be a way to turn the attention towards himself and away from what was happening to Troppmann on the scaffold.

Squeamishness about others is a dangerous feeling. Its roots, however, are to be found in our squeamishness about ourselves. Embracing the dirt of the Russian soil means also accepting one’s own, however base, interiority. While this task is arduous, it is necessary because it constitutes the precondition to avoid squeamishness and being then able to see the *obraz,* the humanity in others, instead of just seeing a disgusting, polluting, other. All the Karamazov brothers are disgusted and contemptuous of Karamazovism, whereas they should embrace it. An overflowing life force is not inherently dangerous in *The Brothers Karamazov,* as it was in *Fathers and Children.* It may be base, but it is also the basis of loving life, which is one of Zosima's main teachings.[92] Furthermore, the Karamazovs' affective "germaphobia" has moral implications, because it translates into emotional illiteracy. Ivan and Mitya's self-disgust turns into disgust for and affective distance from the world. In the early novel, Alyosha is just as distant from the dirt of the world as his brothers. His emotional distance, rooted in germaphobia, is perceived by Liza, Grushenka, and Captain Snegirov. All of them accuse him, directly or indirectly, of feeling contempt. Even Alyosha's feelings of love are marred by a will to "clean up" and sanitize the messy, dirty emotional lives of those around him as well as his own. Throughout the novel, part of his journey involves learning to embrace others without needing to "purify" them and without being able to read them.[93]

All the brothers are faced with emotional challenges to overcome their disgust and fear. Embracing the disgusting and contemptible characters that populate the novel, including the brothers themselves, as Matzner Gore points out, is incredibly difficult, and indeed worthy of a saint (89). Zosima teaches, however, that, as long as we try to work on ourselves, the result is not so important. Madame Khokhlakov (a lady "of little faith") asks the elder how to go about her lack of love for her neighbor: “Но что же делать? Что же в таком случае делать? Тут надо в отчаяние прийти? — Нет, ибо и того довольно, что вы о сем сокрушаетесь. Сделайте, что можете, и сочтется вам” ("But what is to be done, then? What is to be done in such a case? Should one fall into despair?" "No, for it is enough that you are distressed by it. Do what you can, and it will be reckoned unto you; PSS 14: 53, BK 47). The path to purify oneself from squeamishness and fear is through acceptance, and here we see how an awareness of our squeamishness and a desire to overcome it is enough, and it will be reckoned onto us.[94] This means that looking inside and accepting the dirt is a process, a journey, and a long and difficult one at that. Taking on the effort of embarking on it is the most important part.[95] In the following, I will examine each brother’s journey towards accepting the dirt, as well as Smerdyakov’s failure to do so and his consequent condition as miasma.

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[92] Carol Appolonio in her book *Dostoevsky's Secrets* shows how Fyodor Pavlovich represents a source of life, and that getting away from him brings on death instead (144-65).

[93] The idea that illegibility –or our limitations in the ability to penetrate into others' inner lives– is a constituent part of realism and, furthermore, an essential element that made Dostoevsky's realism different from other writers' was an idea held by Dostoevsky himself, as Liza Knapp observes in her essay "Realism" (231).

Mitya

Borrowing a term from Gary Saul Morson, Kate Holland calls Mitya a “generic refugee, a hero in search of a genre,” and examines his position between Romantic convention, tragedy, and comedy, to then insert him in the folk legend tradition (177-82). I would argue that part of what causes Mitya’s generic slipperiness is the fact that under the cover of the wild Romantic hero lies hidden an affective germaphobe. Mitya’s initial physical description immediately places him at an affective distance from the world around him:

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[94] In approving of Mitya’s escape plan, Alyosha restates Zosima’s idea: “Ты хотел мукой возродить в себе другого человека; по-моему, помни только всегда, во всю жизнь и куда бы ты ни убежал, об этом другом человеке — и вот с тебя и довольно. То, что ты не принял большой крестной муки, послужит только к тому, что ты ощутишь в себе еще больший долг и этим беспрерывным ощущением впредь, во всю жизнь, поможешь своему возрождению, может быть, более, чем если б пошел *туда*” (You wanted to regenerate another man in yourself through suffering; I say just remember that other man always, all your life, and wherever you escape to--- and that is enough for you. That you did not accept that great cross will only serve to make you feel a still greater duty in yourself, and through this constant feeling from now on, all your life, you will do more for your regeneration, perhaps, than if you went *there*; PSS 15: 185, BK 648).

[95] Murav draws a similar conclusion: “For Zosima, it is the human effort … that is of value, not necessarily the result” (*Holy Foolishness* 149-50).

> Довольно большие темные глаза навыкате смотрели хотя, по-видимому, и с твердым упорством, но как-то неопределенно. Даже когда он волновался и говорил с раздражением, взгляд его как бы не повиновался его внутреннему настроению и выражал что-то другое, иногда совсем не соответствующее настоящей минуте. «Трудно узнать, о чем он думает», — отзывались иной раз разговаривавшие с ним.
> (His rather large, dark, prominent eyes had an apparently firm and determined, yet somehow vague, look. Even when he was excited and talking irritably, his look, as it were, did not obey his inner mood but expressed something else, sometimes not at all corresponding to the present moment. "It's hard to know what he's thinking about," those who spoke with him would occasionally say; PSS 14: 63, BK 55-56).

Not unlike Smerdyakov, the contemplator, Mitya is characterized, outwardly at least, by a certain illegibility that increases the affective distance between him and others.[96] The reason for this distance, I argue, is not Karamazovian sensualism or Romanticism, but rather the squeamishness he feels towards himself (self-disgust), which in turn makes him feel squeamish for everything that is emotionally dirty, or grotesque, in others and in the world. Mitya declares: “бог задал одни загадки. Тут берега сходятся, тут все противоречия вместе живут. […] Нет, широк человек, слишком даже широк, я бы сузил (God gave us only riddles. Here the shores converge, here all contradictions live together. […] No, man is broad, even too broad, I would narrow him down; PSS 14:100; BK 90-91). People are “too broad” and thus illegible. This is a source of anxiety for Mitya. If we look more closely, however, we realize that it is Mitya who is affectively illiterate. Like Ivan, Mitya cannot bring himself to look at the world around him; he refuses to look, because he is overwhelmed by what he sees as endless suffering: “Страшно много человеку на земле терпеть, страшно много ему бед!” (There's so terribly much suffering for man on earth, so terribly much grief for him, PSS 14: 99, BK 89)! He is afraid and disgusted by the messiness of this suffering and he refuses to face it, or read it. What he is disgusted and made anxious by is his potential involvement in this suffering (Feuer Miller 135), which prevents him from really contemplating it.[97] When he realizes that Samsonov, Grushenka’s protector, sent him on a fool’s errand instead of giving him the money Mitya had asked of him, he has an epiphany: “вдруг его как бы «что-то ударило по лбу», как он сам потом выразился. В один миг произошло какое-то озарение в уме его, «загорелся светоч, и я всё постиг»” (suddenly it was as though “something hit him on the head,” as he himself put it later. In an instant a sort of illumination came to him, “a light shone and I perceived everything;” PSS 14: 342, BK 321). This sudden “illumination” that sheds light on himself and the world, reveals just how repellent and frightening everything is and sends him into despair. He ends up wandering aimlessly through the woods and the fields, lost: “«Какое отчаяние, какая смерть кругом!» — повторял он, всё шагая вперед и вперед” ("What despair, what death all around!" he kept saying as he strode on and on; PSS 14: 342, BK 322). He gets rescued by a passer-by and brought back to town. He does not reflect any further on this moment of clarity and what followed it, instead he seems to immediately forget it. This “illumination,” however, is a precursor to his later realization in his dream of a suffering “wee one.” As Zosima teaches, he will first have to face and accept the desolation inside –and outside- before he can start on a new path.

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[96] Compare with Smerdyakov’s initial physical description: “Если бы в то время кому-нибудь вздумалось спросить, глядя на него: чем этот парень интересуется и что всего чаще у него на уме, то, право, невозможно было бы решить, на него глядя” (If at that time it had occurred to someone to ask, looking at him, what this fellow was interested in, and what was most often on his mind, it would really have been impossible to tell from looking at him; PSS 14: 116, BK 106). This description reminds us of a passage in one of the early psychiatric case studies that we examined in chapter 1, where the psychiatrist illustrated how illegible the outward expressions of mental patients are. Hanna Bograd, in her essay “Sektant li Smerdiakov,” makes the opposite argument and claims that Smerdyakov’s description, and his comparison with the Kramskoy painting, places Smerdyakov in a specific cultural tradition and in this way helps to clarify his narrative role to the reader (510).

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[97] A. A. Kazakov makes a similar observation in his essay “Tema stradaniia nevinnykh v romane ‘Brat'ia Karamazovy’” (186).

In the beginning of the novel, Mitya identifies with an insect, a small, disgusting being, a parasite, which, it was believed, could also be an agent of contagion. His disgust encompasses both his own person, physically and morally, and his belonging to the Karamazov bloodline, which indissolubly connects him with the overwhelming earthly life force that is Karamazovism: “Я, брат, это самое насекомое и есть, и это обо мне специально и сказано. И мы все, Карамазовы, такие же, и в тебе, ангеле, это насекомое живет и в крови твоей бури родит” (I am that very insect, brother ... And all of us Karamazovs are like that, and in you, an angel, the same insect lives and stirs up storms in your blood, PSS 14: 100, BK 90). Having a Karamazov insect inside is terrifying. It is a mysterious infection that causes storms in the blood. As Mitya wrestles with the grotesque contradictions of his desires (what's ignominious for the mind is beautiful for the heart; PSS 14: 100) he is disgusted by the shameful things that take place in his heart, which are a product of the devil. Mitya’s self-disgust is best illustrated by a moment during the preliminary investigation, when he has to lay his body bare. He is afraid that “everyone” will see the ugliest parts of himself, which are normally safely hidden: “Но снять носки ему было даже мучительно: они были очень не чисты, да и нижнее белье тоже, и теперь это все увидали. А главное, он сам не любил свои ноги, почему-то всю жизнь находил свои большие пальцы на обеих ногах уродливыми, особенно один грубый, плоский, как-то загнувшийся вниз ноготь на правой ноге, и вот теперь все они увидят" (But to take his socks off was even painful for him: they were not very clean, nor were his underclothes, and now everyone could see it. And above all he did not like his own feet; all his life for some reason he had found both his big toes ugly, especially the right one with its crude, flat toenail, somehow curved under, and now they would all see it; PSS 14: 435, BK 411). His big toes, which he perceives as disgusting, and which are usually tucked away inside socks and shoes, are now out in the open. Just as he had disassembled his father's face into individual components of disgust, here we see the repulsion heightened down to the curved toenail of a big toe on a bare foot. This corporeal detail, that reminds us of *Oblomov*'s grotesque physical descriptions, encapsulates all of Mitya's repulsion for the bodily versus the spiritual. When the prosecutor leaves the room, Mitya immediately thinks: "Эта дрянь прокурор тоже ушел, верно из презрения, гадко стало смотреть на голого" (That rotten prosecutor left, too, must be from contempt, he got disgusted looking at a naked man; PSS 14: 436, BK 411). His assumption is that when the inner parts of himself are exposed everyone will be repelled and leave.

Mitya is completely removed from the Russian soil. Right as he begins his "Confessions" he tells Alyosha: "Но только вот в чем дело: как я вступлю в союз с землею навек? Я не целую землю, не взрезаю ей грудь" (There's just one thing: how can I make a compact with the earth evermore? I don't kiss the earth, I don't tear open her bosom; PSS 14: 99, BK 89-90). Mitya has separated the idealized idea of "earth" (*zemlia*) from the position he finds himself in, which is in the dirt (*griaz'*), a place riddled with shame and disgust: "я всегда переулочки любил, глухие и темные закоулочки, за площадью, — там приключения, там неожиданности, там самородки в грязи. Я, брат, аллегорически говорю" (I always liked the back lanes, dark and remote little crannies, away from the main square---there lay adventure, there lay the unexpected, nuggets in the dirt. I'm speaking allegorically, brother; PSS 14: 100, BK 91). Mitya connects his essence to what is dirty and repellent, excluding the possibility that there might be messiness and dirt that do contain shame and depravity, but are not limited to that. Throughout his journey, he will have to reconcile the idea of the bodily, of his excessive Karamazov life-force, the dirt, with that of earth, rootedness in the soil. He cannot get to the earth without accepting the dirt.

When Mitya sets out for Mokroe, ready to step aside and let Grushenka have her happiness with her first love, he explains to Perkhotkin: “надо истребить одно смрадное насекомое, чтобы не ползало, другим жизни не портило...” (I must exterminate one foul insect, so that it will not crawl around spoiling life for others; PSS 14: 366, BK 345). He still thinks of himself as a repellent agent of contagion. Yet, at Mokroe, we see him starting to open up to the dirt, even before his “torments” begin. Grushenka helps Mitya, not just Alyosha, through an important emotional transition. First, she gives him new hope and gets him to abandon his suicidal ideations. Then, drunken Grushenka rephrases Mitya’s speech about the Karamazov contradictions: “Хоть и скверные мы, а хорошо на свете. Скверные мы и хорошие, и скверные и хорошие...” (We may be bad, but the world is a good place. We're bad and good, both bad and good…; PSS 14: 397, BK 374). In Grushenka’s rephrasing, there is a note of acceptance in recognizing people’s broad nature, rather than despair. Finally, after they have decided to be together, Grushenka says: “Я землю вот этими руками скрести хочу” (I want to scrape the earth with my hands; PSS 14: 399, BK 376). In addition to the connection to *pochvennichestvo,* this desire also means to stop being afraid of getting dirty, stop keeping the world at a distance. These moments with Grushenka lay the foundation for Mitya’s journey through the torments.

Another important step towards accepting the dirt comes when Mitya learns about Fyodor Pavlovich's death. After he learns that his repellent, odious father is gone, Mitya starts to consider him differently. He tells the district attorney and prosecutor: "Сам-то я нехорош, господа, вот что, сам-то я не очень красив, а потому права не имел и его считать отвратительным, вот что! Это, пожалуй, запишите" (I'm not good myself, gentlemen, that's the thing, I'm not so beautiful myself, and therefore I had no right to consider him repulsive, that's the thing. Perhaps you can write that down; PSS 14: 417, BK 393). This step, as Zosima taught, comes from recognizing the squeamishness one feels for oneself in order to stop feeling it for others. This done, one must deal with the emotional trial that this brings about: "Проговорив это, Митя стал вдруг чрезвычайно грустен" (Having said this, Mitya suddenly became extremely sad; ibid). This sadness is the beginning of what for Dmitri will be life-long suffering in the attempt to recognize and accept his self-disgust.

The final step is the ordeal (*mytarstvo*), that is, the preliminary investigation, when two men who are not "worthy" of contemplating his interiority little by little ravage through his body and mind. He starts by not wanting to show anything: "не скажу, что тут принцип: это моя частная жизнь, и я не позволю вторгаться в мою частную жизнь" (I won't tell you on principle: it's my private life, and I will not allow you to invade my private life; PSS 14:422, BK 397), and ends up revealing the "dirtiest" secret of his soul –the "amulet" with the money he stole from Katya that he keeps on his chest; He also reveals the secret of his body –his filthy underwear and repulsive toes. While the investigation does not achieve any procedural clarity (the prosecutor and the district attorney are unable to read Mitya correctly or solve the case) it allows Dmitri to acknowledge and embrace the dirt, overcome his squeamishness, and start on a new emotional and spiritual path. The preliminary investigation, as painful as it might be, works as a sort of grotesque (and humiliating) maieutic process, in which he is forced to face his disgusting interiority by bringing it out in the open. Mitya relates a recurring dream of his to the prosecutor and district attorney:

> Кто-то за мной гонится, кто-то такой, которого я ужасно боюсь, гонится в темноте, ночью, ищет меня, а я прячусь куда-нибудь от него за дверь или за шкап, прячусь унизительно, а главное, что ему отлично известно, куда я от него спрятался, но что он будто бы нарочно притворяется, что не знает, где я сижу, чтобы дольше промучить меня, чтобы страхом моим насладиться... Вот это и вы теперь делаете! На то похоже!
>
> (Someone is chasing me, someone I'm terribly afraid of is chasing me in the darkness, at night, looking for me, and I'm hiding from him somewhere behind a door or a wardrobe, hiding in a humiliating way, and moreover he knows perfectly well where I'm hiding, but he seems to pretend not to know where I am on purpose, in order to torment me longer, in order to revel in my fear ... That's what you are doing now! It's just the same!; PSS 14: 424; BK 400)

This dream reveals that he, just like Ivan, has desperately been trying “not to think” or rather, not to feel. He has been hiding his interiority from himself because he was too repelled by it. After “dirtying himself” (PSS 14: 432) by sharing his grotesque interiority with them, despair once again takes hold of Mitya: “Лицо его выражало уже совершившееся, уже безвозвратное отчаяние, и он как-то тихо замолк, сидел и как будто себя не помнил” (His face expressed an already complete, already irreversible despair, and he, somehow gently, fell silent, sat, and seemed hardly aware of himself; PSS 14: 448, BK 423). This is the beginning of something new. The dream of the “wee one” who is dying of hunger and cold (PSS 14: 456-57) exposes Mitya to all the dirt, all the contradictions of this world. Instead of running away, however, this time Mitya goes towards it. “Принимаю муку обвинения и всенародного позора моего, пострадать хочу и страданием очищусь” (I accept the torment of accusation and of my disgrace before all, I want to suffer and be purified by suffering; PSS 14: 458, BK 432). It is a full acceptance of the squeamishness he felt towards himself and towards his father – and the suffering that this acceptance brings with it – that purifies, or purges, him (*ochishchat'sia*), as Zosima had taught. This is not the end for Mitya, he has a long journey ahead, but he has finally begun doing the painful work of looking inside that he had been avoiding up until that point.

Ivan

Ivan is also ruled by self-disgust and cannot bear to look inside himself, which in turn makes him an affective germaphobe, ruled by squeamishness for the outside world and his neighbor. His affective germaphobia makes him emotionally illiterate. Ivan is caught in an inner war “not to think,” which is rooted in avoidance of his self-disgust. This struggle will eventually lead to delirium,[98] which will then make it truly impossible for him to read himself: “— А над самим собой можно наблюдать, что сходишь с ума? — Я думаю, нельзя ясно следить за собой в таком случае, — с удивлением отвечал Алеша” (And can one observe oneself losing one's mind?" "I think it must be impossible to watch oneself in such a case," Alyosha answered with surprise; PSS 15: 38, BK 509).[99] Dostoevsky’s critique of Ivan is that by walling himself off from potential germs and miasma he also misses the good bacteria. He retreats into pure abstraction, idealism, where there is no living matter. Like Mitya, he looks at a collection of suffering children without feeling it inside.[100] His struggle after meeting Smerdyakov and living with his repellent father is avoiding inappropriate, grotesque feelings, or trying not to think. Whenever he feels himself veering towards introspection he is immediately overcome by unbearable anguish: "«Тоска до тошноты, а определить не в силах, чего хочу. Не думать разве...» Иван Федорович попробовал было «не думать», но и тем не мог пособить" ('Anguish to the point of nausea, yet it's beyond me to say what I want. Perhaps I shouldn't think...' Ivan Fyodorovich tried "not to think," but that, too, was no use; PSS 14: 242, BK 225). But the more closely we look, the more we see that it is not "thoughts" that Ivan is trying to avoid. The night before deciding to leave his father's house Ivan feels very agitated but cannot quite understand where his anxiety comes from: "И даже если б и попробовали что передать, то было бы очень мудрено это сделать, потому что были не мысли, а было что-то очень неопределенное, а главное — слишком взволнованное. Сам он чувствовал, что потерял все свои концы" (And even if we should try to relate something, it would be very hard to do, because there were no thoughts, but something very indefinite, and, above all, too excited. He himself felt that he had lost his bearings; PSS 14: 251, BK 234). For this rational, overthinking man, a lot of what happens inside him goes beyond thoughts and takes instead the shape of a vague, uncomfortable, bundle of grotesque feelings.

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[98] Melissa Frazier in her essay “Allegories of the Material World: Dostoevsky and Nineteenth-Century Science” notes how George Lewes, a renowned proponent of physiological psychology with whom Dostoevsky was familiar, connected fixed ideas to nervous fever and hallucinations (89-90). In their article “Brain Fever in Dostoevsky,” Jacob Emery and Elizabeth Geballe give a thorough and convincing overview of the tension between physiological and theological explanations for Ivan’s illness.

[99] Vladimir Kantor in his article “Pavel Smerdyakov and Ivan Karamazov: The Problem of Temptation” also noted that Ivan is a riddle not just to others but also to himself (193-94).

Eventually Ivan gets up and tries to listen to the comings and goings in the house from the top of the stairs. "Этот «поступок» он всю жизнь свою потом называл «мерзким» и всю жизнь свою считал, глубоко про себя, в тайниках души своей, самым подлым поступком изо всей своей жизни” (All his life afterwards he referred to this "action" as "loathsome," and all his life, deep in himself, in the inmost part of his soul, he considered it the basest action of his whole life; PSS 14: 251, BK 234). The inmost part of his soul contains a loathsome “action,” *before* the murder is committed. Ivan is tormented by recurring thoughts and feelings that he cannot avoid, no matter how hard he tries. The shame and guilt he feels regarding his trip to Moscow on the day of the murder, for example, also keeps being revisited over and over again. Both these memories are accompanied by unbearable feelings of loathing for himself. It is this feeling of loathing that Ivan tries desperately to avoid and which eventually festers into delirium. After his father’s death, Ivan keeps trying his best not to look inside, “not to think.” After his first meeting with Smerdyakov, while the latter is still at the hospital, he leaves feeling reassured that Mitya and not Smerdyakov is the murder. This sense of reassurance is inappropriate –to wish for his brother Dmitri to be a parricide is unacceptable– and thusly grotesque. Therefore, the idea alone of looking at this feeling more closely is repulsive: “Почему так было — он не хотел тогда разбирать, даже чувствовал отвращение копаться в своих ощущениях” (Why this was so, he did not want to analyze then, he even felt disgusted at rummaging in his feelings. He wanted sooner to forget something, as it were; PSS 15:47, BK 517). At times, Ivan comes dangerously close to being put face to face with his feelings. After his second meeting with Smerdyakov, the young man starts doubting his intentions at the time of the murder, thinking Smerdyakov might be right and that he might have harbored some grotesque desire to kill his father. This glimpse of truth immediately causes a dark cloud to come over him: “Страшный кошмар мыслей и ощущений кипел в его душе” (A terrible nightmare of thoughts and feelings seethed in his soul; PSS 15: 54, BK 524). Ivan is ready to do anything in order not to face this nightmare. For Ivan, reading himself is not only difficult, but terrifying.[101]

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[100] Frank noted that Ivan finds this suffering not only "intellectually incomprehensible" but also "emotionally unendurable" (605).

While Mitya undergoes a wrenching emotional crisis, in which he comes to terms with his own much-despised "filth," Ivan desperately avoids the dreaded work of introspection, and sinks deeper into his feelings of loathing and disgust for others, feelings that apply equally to himself. After the murder, for which he secretly blames himself, he is disgusted with both potential culprits, Smerdyakov and Mitya.[102] He experiences grotesque, incongruent feelings towards Mitya: "он его решительно не любил и много-много что чувствовал к нему иногда сострадание, но и то смешанное с большим презрением, доходившим до гадливости. Митя весь, даже всею своею фигурой, был ему крайне несимпатичен. На любовь к нему Катерины Ивановны Иван смотрел с негодованием" (He decidedly disliked him, and the most he occasionally felt for him was compassion, but even then mixed with great contempt, reaching the point of squeamishness. The whole of Mitya, even his whole figure, was extremely unsympathetic to him. Katerina Ivanovna's love for him Ivan regarded with indignation; PSS 15: 42, BK 512). These feelings eventually give way to unbridled disgust for Mitya: “О брате Дмитрии он уже и подумать не мог без омерзения” (He could not even think of his brother Dmitri now without loathing; PSS 15: 48, 518). These feelings are all but a screen that conveniently prevents him from feeling what he really feels towards himself. Ivan convinces himself of Mitya’s guilt and projects all his revulsion outwards rather than inwards.

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[101] His love for Katerina Ivanovna also serves as a distraction from "thinking:" "Впрочем, в то время он очень был развлечен одним совсем посторонним обстоятельством: приехав из Москвы, он в первые же дни весь и бесповоротно отдался пламенной и безумной страсти своей к Катерине Ивановне" (However, at the time he was much diverted by an altogether extraneous circumstance: in the very first days after his return from Moscow, he gave himself wholly and irrevocably to his fiery and mad passion for Katerina Ivanovna; PSS 15:48, BK 518). He gives himself wholly to the passion. As we have seen in previous chapters, however, vehement passions are just as dangerous in cutting us off from emotional reciprocity as grotesque feelings are. His passion for Katya is not going to help him while there is a nightmare of feelings seething in his soul. "И вот теперь ему однажды подумалось, что из-за всех этих мучительных мыслей он, пожалуй, готов забыть даже и Катерину Ивановну, до того они сильно им вдруг опять овладели" (And then it once occurred to him that because of all these tormenting thoughts, he was perhaps even ready to forget Katerina Ivanovna, so strongly had they suddenly taken possession of him again; PSS 15: 49, BK 519)! His disgust is stronger than romantic, passionate love (which differs from active, Christian love).

[102] Berman underlines how Ivan's hate and disgust are tied to their potential role as parricides ("Viper Will Eat Viper" 93).

Ivan’s incapacity or unwillingness to read Smerdyakov, before or after the murder, is another manifestation of his affective illiteracy. Every reading he offers of his half-brother is wrong. He tells Fyodor Pavlovich that Smerdyakov would be among the first ones to join the revolution (PSS 14: 122). This is a misreading: Smerdyakov tells Maria Kondratievna that he rebels against his birth (PSS 14: 204), while he has no intention of joining an actual revolution (PSS 14: 205). During every conversation with the lackey, Ivan stubbornly refuses to understand what Smerdyakov says. Ironically, one of the refrains in his conversations with Smerdyakov is “speak more clearly” (говори ясней). Ivan shouts it for the first time during their first encounter, when Smerdyakov asks whether he is planning to leave town (PSS 14: 244). In this case, however, Smerdyakov is speaking clearly, it is Ivan who refuses to understand the lackey’s implication. As a matter of fact, Ivan is the only character in the novel with whom Smerdyakov does speak clearly. Yet the theme of illegibility/illiteracy continues for the entire conversation. Ivan insists: “и я тебя что-то не понимаю” (I'm afraid I don't understand you, PSS 14: 245; BK 228), when Smerdyakov is saying that he thinks he will have an epileptic attack the next day and implying that the conditions will be perfect for a crime to take place. In refusing to read Smerdyakov, Ivan avoids facing his own frightening and repulsive feelings. During his third visit, Smerdyakov finally admits openly that he was the murderer and that he understood Ivan to be the brains of the operation, or the “chief murderer” (PSS 15:63).[103] He explains that he thought he had already offered this information, assuming that Ivan was a willing reader: “То же самое и в больнице, говоря с вами, разумел, а только полагал, что вы и без лишних слов поймете и прямого разговора не желаете сами, как самый умный человек-с.” (It was the same thing I had in mind when I spoke with you in the hospital, only I thought you'd understand without so many words, and that you yourself didn't want to talk straight out, being a most intelligent man, sir; PSS 15: 52, BK 522). Smerdyakov implies that Ivan, not being a superficial reader like the lawyers and the other experts, should have been able to understand what was being said. It is Ivan who refused to read Smerdyakov, not Smerdyakov who did not speak clearly. It is Ivan who is emotionally illiterate rather than Smerdyakov who is emotionally illegible.

Ivan’s character, therefore, is defined by analytical obtuseness, a refusal to accept the interpretative keys offered to him readily by Smerdyakov.[104] At the same time, he feels a desire for clarity that clashes with the fear and disgust he experiences about looking inside himself or others. During Ivan’s three visits to the lackey after the murder the refrain “speak more clearly” keeps being repeated. When Smerdyakov tells Ivan that during their conversation he meant to warn him that he should stay and protect his father, Ivan is impatient again about the alleged lack of clarity in their conversation: “— Так ты бы прямее сказал, дурак! (You should have been more direct, fool; PSS 15: 45, BK 515)! This is not a problem of clarity, however, but a problem of reading. Smerdyakov himself points to the fact that he did already make himself as legible as the circumstances allowed: “— Как же бы я мог тогда прямее сказать-с?” (How could I be more direct then, sir? PSS 15: 45, BK 515). As a matter of fact, when Smerdyakov threatens to reveal something more intimate, and reaches towards his stocking to fish something out: “Он в безумном ужасе смотрел на Смердякова” (He [Ivan] looked at Smerdyakov with insane horror; PSS 15: 60, BK 529). Ivan is horrified at the prospect of seeing a dirty undergarment, or perhaps an ugly toe: a physical manifestation of the repellent dirt in others, which he cannot bring himself to look at in himself.

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[103] For a range of differing opinions on the nature of Ivan’s responsibility for the murder see, for example, Bakhtin, (259, 221– 22); Kantor (189-225); and V. E. Vetlovskaia, *Roman F. M. Dostoevskogo “Brat’ia Karamazovy*” (88– 97).

[104] After the murder, desperate to find an alternative reading, Ivan asks Doctor Herzenstube whether the lackey is “crazy.” If Smerdyakov were mad that would render Smerdyakov safely illegible, allowing Ivan to simply ignore the ravings of a madman, or of someone who suffered a “fit of passion.” “На нетерпеливый спрос Ивана Федоровича, что, «стало быть, он теперь сумасшедший?», ему ответили, что «этого в полном смысле еще нет, но что замечаются некоторые ненормальности” (To Ivan Fyodorovich's impatient asking whether "that means he's now mad?" the reply was "not in the full sense of the word, but some abnormalities can be noticed;" PSS 15: 43, BK 513). But Smerdyakov won’t be put in the category of “crazy” even by a superficial reader. Ivan is denied this interpretative key and is left to wrestle with his squeamishness unaided.

Further evidence of Ivan’s emotional illiteracy can be found when Ivan refuses to read Alyosha in a similar way. At some point after the murder, he questions Alyosha directly and invites him also to speak clearly, driven by his (ambiguous) desire for truth: “— Говори же! — воскликнул Иван. — Я изо всей силы хочу знать, что ты тогда подумал. Мне надо; правду, правду! —- Он тяжело перевел дух, уже заранее с какою-то злобой смотря на Алешу” ("Speak!" Ivan exclaimed. "I want with all my strength to know what you thought then. I need it; the truth, the truth!" He was breathing heavily, already looking at Alyosha with some sort of malice beforehand; PSS 15: 49, BK 519). The desire for truth is already paired with “malice,” signaling his grotesque feelings regarding the truth: he desires it and yet he is disgusted and afraid of it at the same time. When Alyosha is confronted by a direct question about Ivan’s wish for his father’s death, just like Smerdyakov, he speaks clearly: yes, Ivan did wish for Fyodor Pavlovich’s demise. As a consequence of this clear answer, however, Ivan cuts off relations with Alyosha. The need to fend off what’s coming from within leads Ivan to fend off what’s coming from without, whether it is from Smerdyakov or Alyosha. Alyosha understands the true nature of Ivan's grotesque feelings and emotional avoidance, which are at the root of his illness: "«Муки гордого решения, глубокая совесть!» Бог, которому он не верил, и правда его одолевали сердце, всё еще не хотевшее подчиниться" (The torments of a proud decision, a deep conscience!' God, in whom he did not believe, and his truth were overcoming his heart, which still did not want to submit, PSS 15: 89, BK 556). Ivan's fight not to think, not to face the basest actions and feelings buried in the inmost depths of his soul is Ivan trying to close himself off against God's truth, which is invading his heart.

The culmination of this hiding from what lies inward that spills outward is Ivan's devil. In the appearance of the devil, we see how Ivan is ultimately powerless against his self-disgust. Having been pushed down for so long it finally erupts in a form that Ivan cannot ignore anymore. Who is this devil? "Ты моя галлюцинация. Ты воплощение меня самого, только одной, впрочем, моей стороны... моих мыслей и чувств, только самых гадких и глупых" (You are my hallucination. You are the embodiment of myself, but of just one side of me... of my thoughts and feelings, but only the most loathsome and stupid of them; PSS 15:72, BK 541). The disgust that he buried "in the inmost part of his soul" reemerges as a pedestrian devil that torments him.[105] Here there is no contagion coming from the outside. Ivan's emotional germaphobia, his attempt to keep himself clean and safe through squeamish disgust for all dirt leaves him utterly defenseless against his own thoughts and feelings.[106] Ivan, talking to Alyosha about his devil declares: "я бы очень желал, чтоб он в самом деле был он, а не я!" (I would much prefer that he were really he and not I; PSS 15: 87, BK 554)! He still wishes to project his disgust outwards (on a certain "him," not "me"). Yet, starting to accept the repulsive and stupid parts of himself would be the beginning of overcoming his disgust for them, according to Zosima. If Ivan could accept that the devil is himself, and face the emotional consequences, that would constitute the starting point to move forward.[107] As the novel ends, however, Ivan's fate still hangs in the balance. Will the illness that was brought on by his prolonged flight from God's truth, which includes accepting the dirt, take him away or will he come out on the other side "purified?"[108]

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[105] Descriptions of the positive attributes of Ivan's devil can be found in Hudspith (122) and F.F. Seeley (116-17).

[106] While Bazarov's ennui leads him to become infected with typhus and experience hallucinations, Ivan's self-disgust leads directly to hallucinations, being thus really a "душевная болезнь." Frazier, however, observes how Dostoevsky, like George Lewes, offers not bodies without minds, but minds and bodies functioning together in the world as two aspects of a single whole (91). Marina Kostalevsky in her essay "Sensual Mind: The Pain and Pleasure of Thinking" also argues

Alyosha

Mentored by the saintly Zosima and spurred by God, Alyosha is the best reader in the novel. He is more successful than his brothers in accepting the dirt, both in himself, and in others. Alyosha contrasts his grotesque feelings with the willingness to accept the text he encounters without necessarily understanding it, which relates directly to empathy – feeling with or for someone without needing to understand/read them.[109] Early in the novel, however, Alyosha still

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that in Dostoevsky's work we witness a "revolutionary break from the romantic opposition that affixed reason to the brain and emotions to the body" (201).

[107] In "Shame's Rhetoric or Ivan's Devil" Martinsen also argues that Ivan's devil paradoxically provides Ivan with the occasion for self-knowledge and self-acceptance (53).

[108] Ivan's fate is the most uncertain at the end of the novel. Incidentally, as Re Omazu observes, Ivan, unlike Mitya or Alyosha, does not have a cherished childhood memory (451).

[109] In her book *The Gift of Active Empathy,* Alina Wyman proposes to popularize Bakhtin's early idea of active empathy (*vzhivanie*) as the moral foundation in Dostoevsky for spiritual maturation "through and with the other," which actually accounts for others' illegibility: "In the final analysis, Bakhtin's system is flawed by his neglect of the concealed part of the other's psyche. Unacknowledged by Bakhtin, this largely monological core of the self inevitably faces inward, away from the partner in dialogical exchange, and may be related to what Scheler calls the region of absolute privacy. Paradoxically, this incommunicable residue of the self creates the dialogical tension necessary for a productive interaction. By positing the ultimate limit of projection into another personality, this Schelerian entity guarantees the non-coincidence of consciousnesses, so

has a long journey ahead. Liza wants to help Alyosha look after people "like children" or "sick people." These categories reflect Alyosha's will to "clean up" that is part of his heroic (rather than Christian) impulses. He even has a sense that in his current "heroic" mode his ability to read others is not ready: "я готов, только я сам не совсем готов; я иной раз очень нетерпелив, а в другой раз и глазу у меня нет" (I'm ready---only personally I'm not quite ready. I'm sometimes very impatient, and sometimes I don't see things; PSS 14: 197, BK 183-84). His impatience is characterized by his need to "do something," to intervene in messy situations. Instead of accepting the dirt, he is driven by a desire to clean up, to make everything clear and unambiguous. At first, Alyosha's love does not admit contradictions. For example, the struggle between his brothers over Katerina Ivanovna makes Alyosha uncomfortable: "А главное, кого ему, Алеше, жалеть? И что каждому пожелать? Он любит их обоих, но что каждому из них пожелать среди таких страшных противоречий" (And, above all, whom should he, Alyosha, feel pity for, and what should he wish for each of them? He loved them both, but what could he wish for each of them amid such terrible contradictions; PSS 14: 170, BK 157)? His wish is to bring order, cleanliness, to a messy situation, characterized by grotesque, contradictory feelings. Part of the problem is *how* he loves his brothers:

> В этой путанице можно было совсем потеряться, а сердце Алеши не могло выносить неизвестности, потому что характер любви его был всегда деятельный. Любить пассивно он не мог; возлюбив, он тотчас же принимался и помогать. А

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crucial for the Bakhtinian vision of human communication. Because the other's inner world can never be completely encompassed in the empathizer's consciousness, the early Bakhtinian concept of consummation, rejected by the later Bakhtin, may now also be revised and rehabilitated for use in philosophical analysis. If the region of absolute privacy is acknowledged, the empathizer's completion of the other's spiritual image is not a dead end, but rather an opening, I argue" (11). For a summary of the critiques of Bakhtin's work on Dostoevsky (along with a compelling defense of it), see Caryl Emerson, *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin* (73– 91, 127– 61).

> для этого надо было поставить цель, надо твердо было знать, что каждому из них хорошо и нужно, а утвердившись в верности цели, естественно, каждому из них и помочь. Но вместо твердой цели во всем была лишь неясность и путаница.
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> (One could get completely lost in this tangle, and Alyosha's heart could not bear uncertainty, for the nature of his love was always active. He could not love passively; once he loved, he immediately also began to help. And for that one had to have a goal, one had to know firmly what was good and needful for each of them, and becoming firmly convinced of the correctness of the goal, naturally also to help each of them. But instead of a firm goal there was only vagueness and confusion in everything; PSS 14: 170, BK 157-58)

Alyosha's love is active in a heroic way, not in the way that Zosima prescribes. Thus, it represents an obstacle to the readerly form of empathic acceptance required by the situation. Firm convictions and unambiguous correctness are a sanitized ideal that does not correspond to the affective messiness of real life. Throughout the novel, we follow him in his journey to move from avoiding the uncomfortable quality of grotesque ambiguity to accepting illegibility and dirt both in himself and others. He needs to learn how to love in order to learn how to read. He needs to learn an active love that, like Zosima's, is marked by acceptance of dirt.[110]

He takes a first step in this direction in the "Laceration" (*Nadryv*) section. After Alyosha meets Ivan and Katerina, he suddenly sees their romantic situation very clearly. Without further reflection, he shares his revelation with everyone, without thinking that it is inappropriate talk for a drawing room with a woman he barely knows. His epiphany causes great commotion in both Katerina Ivanovna and Ivan. This unexpected turn makes him feel profoundly ashamed: “Нет, это я всему причиной, я ужасно виноват! — повторял неутешный Алеша в порыве мучительного стыда за свою выходку и даже закрывая руками лицо от стыда” (‘No, I was the cause of it all, I am terribly to blame!’ the inconsolable Alyosha repeated in a burst of agonizing shame for his escapade, and even covered his face with his hands in shame; PSS 14: 177, BK 164). This incident has a strong effect on Alyosha. After some time passes, however, instead of burying this shameful moment in the inmost part of his soul, only to have it re-emerge over and over again, Alyosha is able to move past his distress through acceptance: “Таким образом, увлекшись посторонними соображениями, он развлекся и решил не «думать» о сейчас наделанной им «беде», не мучить себя раскаянием, а делать дело, а там что будет, то и выйдет. На этой мысли он окончательно ободрился” (Thus, drawn to other thoughts, he became distracted and decided not to "think" about the "disaster" he had just caused, not to torment himself with remorse, but to go about his business, and let be what came. With that thought, he finally cheered up; PSS 14: 179, BK 165). Alyosha’s decision to be open to the consequences of his actions and to look upon himself with empathy is very different from the combative attempt not to think that Ivan pursues. The acceptance of an uncertain future is implicitly an acceptance of grotesque feelings, both for himself and for others. This dirt is quintessentially human, and its acceptance allows Alyosha to continue on his path as helper of others.

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[110] Wyman notes that Alyosha's strength as a reader is admitting his limitations: "In fact, Alyosha's inability to reach a definite conclusion about the others' motives ("how can I make such decisions?") becomes an asset in his practical interactions with these others, because it leaves room for their own crucial self- definition" (197).

Zosima himself taught him to avoid pushing the limits of understanding, not to expect people, or God, to “speak clearly.” Alyosha does not expect clarity from God. After a day spent with his quarreling brothers and father, and a horrible scene between Katerina Ivanovna and Grushenka, he goes back to the monastery and says his evening prayers: “В горячей молитве своей он не просил бога разъяснить ему смущение его” (In his ardent prayer, he did not ask God to explain his confusion to him; PSS 14: 40, BK 134). He is still tempted, however, to ask his beloved elder to speak more clearly. During the disastrous Karamazov visit to the elder’s cell, Zosima bowed to Mitya, explaining later that he foresaw great suffering in his future. Alyosha would like to know more about his brother’s fate and begs his teacher to be less “vague” (неясный). Zosima answers: “Не любопытствуй […] Но всё от господа и все судьбы наши (Do not be curious. […] everything is from the Lord, and all our fates as well; PSS 14: 257, BK 242). Alyosha, like Ivan with Smerdyakov, is asking for clarity (ясность) that cannot be given. Unlike Ivan’s, however, his journey will eventually bring him to accept the opacity and dirt.

After his elder dies and his body starts to decay prematurely, Alyosha experiences a great emotional and spiritual crisis. His elder’s death and the disgusting decomposition of his body is another thing that cannot be cleaned up, sanitized, and made to follow a pre-ordained plan. It is messy, polluting, and scary. Alyosha falls victim of squeamishness and fear. To justify his torment, however, the narrator tells us: “в иных случаях, право, почтеннее поддаться иному увлечению, хотя бы и неразумному, но всё же от великой любви происшедшему, чем вовсе не поддаться ему” (in certain cases, really, it is more honorable to yield to some passion, however unwise, if it springs from great love, than not to yield to it at all; PSS 14: 306, BK 287); and later adds: “я рад, что мой юноша оказался не столь рассудительным в такую минуту, ибо рассудку всегда придет время у человека неглупого, а если уж и в такую исключительную минуту не окажется любви в сердце юноши, то когда же придет она” (I am glad that at such a moment my young man turned out to be not so reasonable, the time will come for an intelligent man to be reasonable, but if at such an exceptional moment there is no love to be found in a young man's heart, then when will it come; PSS 14: 307, BK 288)? Even though Alyosha is running away out of fear and squeamishness, the narrator still makes a point to remind us that inside him, alongside disgust and fear there is great love, and there lies the potential to overcome his grotesque feelings.[111]

If we examine Alyosha's crisis moment we see that the turning point is when he opens up, without fear or squeamishness, to the dirt of his inner stirrings and desires: disgust for bodily decomposition, and fear of his own Karamazovian lust. After the odor of decay starts spreading from his elder, Alyosha, who feels disgusted and scared, follows Rakitin to Grushenka's house, a woman he fears, seeking his own destruction. What happens when they meet, however, is quite the opposite: the two find a level of connection that resembles that of brotherly (active) love. The moment of the shift is marked by a peculiar feeling:

> Эта женщина, которую он боялся более всех, […] возбуждала в нем вдруг теперь совсем иное, неожиданное и особливое чувство, чувство какого-то необыкновенного, величайшего и чистосердечнейшего к ней любопытства, и всё это уже безо всякой боязни, без малейшего прежнего ужаса — вот что было главное и что невольно удивляло его.
>
> (This woman, of whom he was afraid most of all, […] now aroused in him suddenly quite a different, unexpected, and special feeling, the feeling of some remarkable, great, and most pure-hearted curiosity, and without any fear now, without a trace of his former terror---that was the main thing, and it could not but surprise him; PSS 14: 315-16, BK 296).

Genuine, disinterested curiosity overcomes (self-)disgust and fear, and opens Alyosha up to whatever may come, without biases. This is a fundamental aspect of opening up to the dirt. The

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[111] Frank also highlighted this moment (640).

"main thing" is that his curiosity is lacking any of his former terror. Where did the terror come from? From the fear of facing his own base feelings of sensuality.[112] Once he opens himself, *genuinely,* to what lies ahead, lets Grushenka sit in his lap, lets her get close to him, emotionally and physically, the change within him begins.

After his emotionally cleansing experience with Grushenka he gets back to the monastery. Inside him we see an antithesis of what grotesque feelings are: "Душа его была переполнена, но как-то смутно, и ни одно ощущение не выделялось, слишком сказываясь, напротив, одно вытесняло другое в каком-то тихом, ровном коловращении. Но сердцу было сладко, и, странно, Алеша не удивлялся тому" (His soul was overflowing, but somehow vaguely, and no single sensation stood out, making itself felt too much; on the contrary, one followed another in a sort of slow and calm rotation. But there was sweetness in his heart, and, strangely, Alyosha was not surprised at that; PSS 14: 325, BK 304-305). In his path to accepting the dirt he just lets all feelings flow without order, without clarity, and that brings sweetness to his heart. The culmination of this opening to the dirt comes after Alyosha's dream of Cana of Galilee. Alyosha goes outside and suddenly falls down and kisses the earth, physically and emotionally embracing all that is dirty, polluting, and messy. "Он не знал, для чего обнимал ее, он не давал себе отчета, почему ему так неудержимо хотелось целовать ее, целовать ее всю, но он целовал ее плача, рыдая и обливая своими слезами, и исступленно клялся любить ее, любить во веки веков" (He did not know why he was embracing it, he did not try to understand why he longed so irresistibly to kiss it, to kiss all of it, but he was kissing it, weeping, sobbing, and watering it with his tears, and he vowed ecstatically to love it, to love it unto ages of ages). In this moment, Alyosha has abandoned all desire for clarity, and has given himself fully to love. He is not examining the reason behind his actions; he is simply embracing the dirt. The passage continues: “О чем плакал он? О, он плакал в восторге своем даже и об этих звездах, которые сияли ему из бездны, и «не стыдился исступления сего». Как будто нити ото всех этих бесчисленных миров божиих сошлись разом в душе его, и она вся трепетала, «соприкасаясь мирам иным»” (What was he weeping for? Oh, in his rapture he wept even for the stars that shone on him from the abyss, and "he was not ashamed of this ecstasy." It was as if threads from all those innumerable worlds of God all came together in his soul, and it was trembling all over, "touching other worlds"; PSS 14: 328, BK 307). His fear and squeamishness have disappeared, and alongside them his shame disappeared too. Rather than a grotesque combination of messy, confusing feelings, his interiority is now populated by threads from God’s innumerable worlds. The nature of his love has changed, and his will to clean up and see clearly through the dirt has vanished. This new love is based on empathy, which includes the ability of feeling with someone without having to understand them.

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[112] In her essay "The Sexuality of the Male Virgin" Susanne Fusso discusses Alyosha's constant blushing in the first part of the novel as a sign not only of his chastity but also of the potential impurity of his thoughts (146).

There is one exception, however, to Alyosha’s newfound ability to face what is squeamish and disgusting. Anna Berman noted that Alyosha fails the test of brotherly love when it comes to Smerdyakov. Alyosha does not feel any genuine curiosity about Smerdyakov. As critics have pointed out, he never considers him as a brother, someone worth getting to know after years spent apart.[113] He curtly dismisses the issue of his faith, “Нет, у Смердякова совсем не русская вера, — серьезно и твердо проговорил Алеша” (’No, Smerdyakov's faith is not Russian at all,’ Alyosha spoke seriously and firmly; PSS 14: 120, BK 110), whereas he keeps thinking about

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[113] Ol’ga Meerson examines in depth how everyone, including narrator and readers, fails to see Smerdyakov as a fourth brother both in her book *Dostoevsky’s Taboos*, and in her article “Chetvertyi brat ili kozel otpushcheniia ex machina?”. Saraskina also notes that during Alyosha’s speech at the stone, he forgets to commemorate two other people who have recently died: his father and half-brother, Smerdyakov (547).

Ivan's faith. When he meets Ilyusha and gets bitten by him, Alyosha tries to look beyond his aggression and get the full story: a story of pain behind his anger. He never shows this kind of interest in Smerdyakov, even though he plays a part in the Ilyusha story as well. (What led Smerdyakov to tell Ilyusha to put a pin in the bread?). But the novel teaches us that marginalized people are dangerous: when Grushenka thinks Alyosha feels contempt for her, she is ready to destroy him. When Madame Khokhlakov and the Karamazovs reject Rakitin, he starts smearing them in the press. Fyodor Pavlovich acts out because he believes everyone considers themselves better than him. If there was an opportunity to redeem Smerdyakov, and bring him back into the fold, according to Zosima's idea that no one should be ostracized by the brotherhood of the church, the opportunity is missed. Smerdyakov, hidden away under a layer of contempt and disgust, as Matzner Gore has shown, not only gets to commit a murder, but also manages to successfully influence the outcome of the trial in his favor (85-86). While Alyosha passes numerous tests in the novel -- he is able to overcome disgust for empathy, and fear for curiosity -- he fails to overcome his contempt when it comes to Smerdyakov.[114] This moral failing reminds the reader that Alyosha is young and, while his journey towards the acceptance of illegibility and dirt has taken him much further towards Christian love than it has Mitya or Ivan, he also has a long path ahead of him.

Smerdyakov

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[114] Anna Berman in *Siblings in Tolstoy and Dostoevsky* refutes Meerson's idea that Smerdyakov's status as a brother represents a taboo in the novel. Recognizing the lackey as a brother represents a test rather than a taboo. In her view, Mitya, Ivan, *and* Alyosha fail this test by ignoring or rejecting Smerdyakov: "Remembering Mikhail's teaching ("Until one has indeed become the brother of all, there will be no brotherhood."), it could be argued that by rejecting Smerdyakov, not only Dmitri, Ivan, and Alyosha, but all the characters in the novel fail at Zosima's central commandment to love all of God's creation" (127).

Smerdyakov is the ultimate affective germaphobe, but also the miasma that everyone's afraid of smelling. Like a miasma, while the lackey carries a strong smell (смердит) he is invisible. What hides him from sight is contempt.[115] The contempt that others feel for him allows him to murder his father and get away with it. It makes others constantly underestimate him and forget about him, i.e., dismiss him.[116] It prevents him from joining the society of brothers. Smerdyakov becomes the object of contempt first and foremost because of his social status: the lackey. Smerdyakov's social status is characterized as contemptible when the narrator apologizes for having to talk about him, *because* he is a lackey (PSS 14: 93). His birth puts him in this social position: he is a bastard.[117] His mother existed on the margins of society, as a holy fool. His adopted family also keeps him in this social position: Marfa and Grigory are ex-serfs and Grigory rejects the idea of changing their social status after the emancipation. The gentry characters, even the ones who actually took some kind of interest in him, dismiss him. Fyodor and Ivan over cognac talk about him for a minute before changing the subject to a more worthy topic: the existence of God. Fyodor Pavlovich asks: "по правде-то, так стоит ли об нем говорить? — Конечно, не стоит"

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[115] Building on Hobbes and Nietzsche, Ngai defines the object of contempt as "too weak or insignificant to pose any sort of danger, [it] is perceived as inferior in a manner that allows it to be dismissed or ignored" (336). This quality of dismissability is fundamental. While the disgusting reclaims our attention, the contemptuous can be tolerated and thus ignored. Miller discusses contempt in very similar terms (215).

[116] James Rice attributes this freedom of movement to epilepsy. He links the figure of Smerdyakov to a book quoted by Kolia Krasotkin, *Muhammad's Kinsman, or Therapeutic Lunacy*, the protagonist of which uses madness (in that case, feigned) to gain a kind of freedom that would have been unattainable otherwise in their social position (274).

[117] Chloe Kitzinger distinguishes between the way in which Ivan and Mitya use the word "подлец" metaphorically to mean "scoundrel" while it applies to Smerdyakov literally to mean "bastard:" "As a literal *podlets* (bastard), Smerdyakov cannot use the word in its figurative moral sense of "scoundrel," as Dmitri and Ivan do, to ally himself with the redeemable vileness of Karamazovism rather than with the damning crimes he has committed. Unlike the named Karamazovs, Smerdyakov virulently rejects this label: "I'd kill in a duel with a pistol the man who said to me that I was baseborn [*podlets*] because I came from the Stinkess, without a father" (225; 14:204)" (149, transl. by Chloe Kitzinger).

('and furthermore to hell with him, really, is he worth talking about?' 'Of course not'; PSS 14: 122, BK 111), replies Ivan. Ivan considers him disposable in a revolution, even though Smerdyakov has no intention of rebelling. The contempt everyone feels for him allows him to shape the experts' opinion after the murder as well. When Ivan speaks with Herzenstube and relates to him his doubts about Smerdyakov's mental condition, Herzenstube replies: "А вы знаете, чем он теперь особенно занимается? — спросил он Ивана Федоровича, — французские вокабулы наизусть учит; у него под подушкой тетрадка лежит и французские слова русскими буквами кем-то записаны, хе-хе-хе!" (And do you know what he is especially doing now?" he asked Ivan Fyodorovich. "He is learning French vocables by heart; he has a notebook under his pillow, and someone has written out French words for him in Russian letters, heh, heh, heh; PSS 15: 48, BK 518)! Trying to improve his social station is taken as a sign of madness. Instead of reading his desire to go abroad as the sign that he got hold of a big sum of money, they ridicule him for acting erratically.[118] Contempt allows everyone to banish this noxious element out of view. Smerdyakov, however, uses the contempt that others feel for him to his advantage, to prove that he cannot be ignored.[119]

Smerdyakov himself, however, is dominated by contempt. Smerdyakov desperately tries to recant his origins, becoming rootless and dangerous.[120] Once he has contemptuously cut off his relationship with soil and dirt, he is just empty air, and becomes a miasma, spoiled by European modernity without any ground to rest on. His contempt extends to everyone and everything around him: “он был страшно нелюдим и молчалив. Не то чтобы дик или чего-нибудь стыдился, нет, характером он был, напротив, надменен и как будто всех презирал (He was terribly unsociable and taciturn. Not that he was shy or ashamed of anything---no, on the contrary, he had an arrogant nature and seemed to despise everyone; PSS 14: 114, BK 104). Smerdyakov is a germaphobe, cut off from the world, protected by a shell of contempt and disgust. This is reflected even in his relationship with inanimate objects, like food: “в Смердякове мало-помалу проявилась вдруг ужасная какая-то брезгливость” (Smerdyakov suddenly was beginning to show signs of some terrible squeamishness; PSS 14: 115, BK 105). His squeamishness protects him physically from external pollutants just like his contempt protects him emotionally. His focus on cleanliness increases even more after he returns from Moscow (PSS 14: 116). His interest in keeping a clean and tidy person is not motivated by romantic interest in women or in men.[121] Rather, it is a way to maintain his distance from the world. Furthermore, it distances him from his most hated origin by birth, Liza Smerdyashaya, and the heritage of a foul smell, and by adoption, Grigory’s filthy person.[122]

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[118] I won't go into much more detail because Matzner Gore offers a great analysis of how Smerdyakov uses his low social status to influence the investigation (84-87). Morson also discusses Smerdyakov's use of the "power of the margins" (235).

[119] Morson argues that Smerdyakov ruins his brothers because they do not acknowledge him as a brother (241).

[120] Matzner Gore notes that: "the most envious, unlikable characters in *The Brothers Karamazov* are associated with foul smells" (88). Meerson, on the other hand, analyzes how the word "*smerd*" is always used in opposition to the word "*brat*" ("Chetvertyi brat," 596-98).

His affective germaphobia prevents him from forming emotional bonds with people, animals, things, or places. Unlike the other Karamazov brothers, and even Fyodor Pavlovich, who, as Corrigan demonstrated, always attach themselves to someone (*Dostoevsky and the Riddle of the Self* 49), Smerdyakov is completely untethered, and this makes him dangerous. He feels no empathy for fellow lowly creatures, such as pets: he hangs cats and he tells Ilyusha how to hurt his dog by hiding a pin in a piece of bread. Nor for fellow humans of lower social stations. He complains to Maria Kondratievna about how he despises fellow Russian peasants (PSS 14: 204-205). Even though he comes from a small provincial town, finding himself suddenly in Moscow has no particular effect on him, and he does not seem interested in the city at all (PSS 14: 115-116). Similarly, he dismisses literature and religion. It is also unclear whether his suicide is born out of guilt for the murder.[123] After confessing the murder in detail to Ivan: "Нельзя было, однако, угадать, чувствует ли он раскаяние или что" (It was impossible to tell, however, whether he felt repentant or what; PSS 15: l65, BK 534). We have seen in Chapter One that a lack of repentance was often considered a sign of abnormal psychology, because it denoted a lack of emotional reciprocity and emotional connection to the world. His vile acts alone would not have the same strength if they were not accompanied by the lack of the appropriate feeling in response. It is tenfold more monstrous to corrupt a child and talk him into killing his dog and then *forget about it,* rather than recognizing that one has gone too far and patching up the emotional divide that has been created through such base action. His lack of emotional connections makes others dismiss his humanity. The question of Smerdyakov's humanity in the eyes of others is a pressing one.[124] Grigory accuses him of not loving him and Marfa, of not loving anyone, and thus of not being a person: "ты не человек, ты из банной мокроты завелся, вот ты кто..." (You are not a human being, you were begotten of bathhouse slime, that's who you are…; PSS 14: 114, BK 104). Ivan thinks of him as a “fly” and not a man (PSS 15: 67), Fyodor Pavlovich calls him an “ass” repeatedly (PSS 14: 122). People who are emotionally cut off from others are considered abnormal, and often, less than human. Maybe Smerdyakov had the potential to become more human and less miasma. More Pavel Fyodorovich and less Smerdyakov.[125] But by being quarantined off, cut off from any possibility of active love, he loses that potential and turns fully into a pestilent miasma.[126]

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[121] Fusso discusses the figure of Smerdyakov as chronic masturbator (149-50).
[122] Vladimir Golstein analyzes the figure of Grigory as bad, and even abusive, father in his essay “Accidental Families and Surrogate Fathers” (96-101).

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[123] Smerdyakov's suicide has been examined in many works, including: Holquist, *Dostoevsky and the Novel* (182), Berman, *Siblings in Tolstoy and Dostoevsky* (127), Irina Paperno, *Suicide as a Cultural Institution in Dostoevsky's Russia,* and Susan Morrissey, *Suicide and the Body Politic in Imperial Russia,* and Amy Ronner, *Dostoevsky as Suicidologist: Self Destruction and the Creative Process.*

[124] Morson discusses Smerdyakov as a character at the threshold between human and non-human (236-37). Ani Kokobobo in *Russian Grotesque Realism* argued that: "The more pervasive features of estrangement in grotesque realism revolve around the category of humanity and the ways in which a human being can become dehumanized even while categorically retaining his or her biological humanity" (14).

One glimmer of possibility happens in the moment when he professes to feel love for Ivan (PSS 15: 46-47). Ivan and Smerdyakov are brothers in contempt. Ivan, like Smerdyakov, keeps the world at a distance through squeamishness. Alyosha, talking about Ivan asserts: “Он никого не презирает, — продолжал Алеша. — Он только никому не верит. Коль не верит, то, конечно, и презирает” ("He doesn't despise anyone," Alyosha went on, "he simply doesn't believe anyone. And since he doesn't believe them, he also, of course, despises them; PSS 15: 24, BK 495-96). Like Smerdyakov’s contempt, Ivan’s has the potential to extend to everyone around him. Similarly, then, he risks being emotionally cut off and in turn losing his humanity. Fyodor Pavlovich says about Ivan “Но Иван никого не любит, Иван не наш человек, эти люди, как Иван, это, брат, не наши люди, это пыль поднявшаяся... Подует ветер, и пыль пройдет...” (But Ivan loves nobody, Ivan is not one of us; people like Ivan are not our people, my friend, they're a puff of dust ... The wind blows, and the dust is gone; PSS 14: 159, BK 147). While

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[125] In Kitzinger’s view, Smerdyakov’s role as a secondary and “suppressed” character, and as a “not-Karamazov” is essential for the novel’s mimetic and narrative architecture, which hinges upon an asymmetrical structure of realist characters. Additionally, according to Kitzinger, he plays an important moral function: “…the novel itself needs a character that separates the Karamazovs from the acts of theft, murder, and (especially) suicide” (148).

[126] As Matzner Gore observed: “As the novel shows again and again, marginalizing, isolating, or even killing harmful and destructive people does not neutralize the social danger they pose. To the contrary, it can make them *stronger*” (87). The negative consequences of being ostracized and cut off by the community should not be confused with a defense of environment theory (this man was brought to commit his criminal action by the circumstances), which, as Harriet Murav notes in her work on holy foolishness, Dostoevsky attacked in nearly all his works (39).

Smerdyakov was “bathhouse mold,” Ivan is reified into a puff of dust because of his lack of emotional ties to other people. Yet there is an important difference: Ivan is the recipient of something that Smerdyakov never experiences: brotherly love. Alyosha loves him and this love infuses humanity into Ivan. This also encourages emotional reciprocity: “Я с тобой хочу сойтись, Алеша, потому что у меня нет друзей, попробовать хочу” (I want to get close to you, Alyosha, because I have no friends. I want to try; PSS 14: 213, BK 198). Feeling anything for others is a sign of normalcy and it restores our humanity. Alyosha keeps Ivan tied to the community of people and feelings. But Ivan never loves Smerdyakov.

In his relationship with Ivan, Smerdyakov’s roles as germaphobe and miasma fuse together. While Fyodor Pavlovich opens the door and lets in the miasma, which kills him on the spot, Ivan, protected by his affective illiteracy (the impossibility to read his own and his neighbor’s interiority), manages to maintain an affective distance from Smerdyakov, for a time.[127] Dostoevsky wrote to a correspondent: “Ivan Fyodorovich participated in the murder *only indirectly* and *at a distance*, solely by the fact that he refrained (intentionally) from bringing Smerdyakov to reason during a conversation with him before departing for Moscow, he refrained from expressing to him clearly and categorically *his disgust at the evil deed being planned by him* (which Ivan Fyodorovich saw and clearly had premonitions of)” (PSS 30,1: 129). In another seeming paradox, Ivan’s disgust for his interiority prevented him from expressing his disgust at Smerdyakov’s plan. Because his disgust was mixed with grotesque desires. This fact, however, does make Ivan feel complicit in the murder and sink even deeper in a struggle “not to feel.” Smerdyakov, however, overpowers Ivan and switches places with him affectively. By the end of the novel, Ivan has become the object of the lackey's squeamishness. Being shunned by the miasma is the final, intolerable push that drives Ivan to madness.[128]

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[127] Apollonio, among others, has noted how “fantastic” and improbable the timing and logistics of Smerdyakov’s crime are and compared him to a demonic, rather than human, killer (162).

When they first meet, Ivan, flaunting his lack of squeamishness, and priding himself to be someone who can move across different worlds (let's think for example of his article, which is interesting for church- and lay people alike), takes an interest (участие) in Smerdyakov. Ivan's sin is hubris, thinking that his rationality can protect him from the miasma. He believes he will be able to maintain an affectively distanced relationship with Smerdyakov. He tries to mentor him: "сам приучил его говорить с собою" (He got him accustomed to talking with him; PSS 14: 242, BK 226), and tries to pry open his interiority, i.e., to read him. During this process, Ivan allows for the affective barrier between them to fall. Once Smerdyakov gets closer to Ivan than squeamishness would normally allow, a few unpleasant things happen. First, Smerdyakov's interiority reveals itself to be completely illegible. Second, Ivan comes into contact with Smerdyakov's injured vanity (his lack of emotional ties to others): "С этого и началось его отвращение" (Here the loathing began; PSS 14: 243, BK 226). Finally, they get too close: "Но главное, что раздражило наконец Ивана Федоровича окончательно и вселило в него такое отвращение, — была какая-то отвратительная и особая фамильярность, которую сильно стал выказывать к нему Смердяков, и чем дальше, тем больше" (But in the end the thing that finally most irritated Ivan Fyodorovich and filled him with such loathing was a sort of loathsome and peculiar familiarity, which Smerdyakov began displaying towards him more and more markedly; ibid). In this familiarity, in addition of excessive proximity, Ivan perhaps also discovers too much of himself in the lackey. One on hand, this fetid lackey gets too close to his master, on the other, Ivan gets too close to reognizing a reflection of what he does not want to see in himself in his half-brother.[129] Ivan is desperately trying to avoid looking at the repulsive dirt inside of himself, and Smerdyakov's proximity anticipates the devil's: a physical embodiment of all that is repulsive and despicable inside himself. A physical person, however, is much harder to avoid than some feelings buried in the inmost part of one's soul.

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[128] Bakhtin made a similar observation about the role reversal between these two characters, made possible by Ivan's refusal to read himself, except that he put it in terms of "voice" rather than affectivity: "Smerdyakov gradually gains control over Ivan's voice, which the latter is concealing from himself. Smerdyakov is able to govern this voice precisely because Ivan's consciousness does not look in that direction and does not want to look there" (427, transl. by Caryl Emerson).

Smerdyakov oversteps the boundary set by contempt and becomes "worth talking about" for Ivan. Not only does Smerdyakov make himself "worth talking about," but talking about him has great consequence for Ivan. As Alyosha tells him about his meeting with the lackey: "Иван стал вдруг очень озабоченно слушать, кое-что далее переспросил" (Ivan suddenly began listening very anxiously, and even asked him to repeat certain things; PSS 14: 211, BK 196). Smerdyakov's affective influence over Ivan demands that certain things be *repeated*, thus that not only will he be talked about, but that he'd be talked about again. The mere mention of Smerdyakov affects Ivan profoundly, *well before* the murder is committed: "Давеча, еще с рассказа Алеши о его встрече со Смердяковым, что-то мрачное и противное вдруг вонзилось в сердце его и вызвало в нем тотчас же ответную злобу" (Earlier, with Alyosha's story of his encounter with Smerdyakov, something gloomy and disgusting had suddenly pierced his heart and immediately evoked a reciprocal malice; PSS 14: 242; BK 225). After the murder, Ivan's negative feelings for Smerdyakov can be explained by the fact that the servant killed their father and Ivan feels that he shares responsibility for that. But what about before the murder? Smerdyakov is bringing Ivan too close to looking inside.[130]

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[129] The idea of Smerdyakov as Ivan's double is well affirmed in Dostoevsky scholarship. It has been noted, among others, by Belknap (*The Structure* 37-38), Frank (593), and Apollonio (161).

After the murder, their closeness becomes increasingly intolerable and yet irresistible for Ivan. The young man feels himself drawn towards Smerdyakov by some unexplained force. The drive to see him strikes him suddenly and is accompanied by violent feelings: “Он почувствовал, что весь еще дрожит злобною дрожью” (He felt himself still trembling all over with a spiteful trembling; PSS 15: 41, BK 511). This is the signal that he is thinking about Smerdyakov: “Вот к нему-то и направился теперь Иван Федорович, влекомый одним внезапным и непобедимым соображением” (It was to him that Ivan Fyodorovich now directed his steps, drawn by a sudden and irresistible consideration; PSS 15: 41, BK 511-12). Smerdyakov has become a magnet towards which Ivan keeps being drawn. In a grotesque development, he is both unbearably repulsed and irresistibly attracted to Smerdyakov.[131] As their relationship progresses, Ivan becomes the object of contempt, and eventually even disgust, for Smerdyakov. By Ivan’s second visit to Smerdyakov, the latter’s attitude has changed greatly: Ivan notices a “взгляд Смердякова, решительно злобный, неприветливый и даже надменный” (look in Smerdyakov's eyes, decidedly malicious, unfriendly, and even haughty; PSS 15: 50, BK 520). Smerdyakov is not dismissing Ivan yet, but he is dismissing what he wants to talk about. Smerdyakov believes that this second visit, and even the first visit, are superfluous. They already talked about everything before the murder. He tolerates it, however, with a hint of contempt. Taken aback by Smerdyakov’s change in attitude, Ivan tries to re-establish some boundaries between them: “Что я в союз, что ли, в какой с тобою вступал, боюсь тебя, что ли” (Have I entered into some league with you or what? Am I afraid of you or what; PSS 15: 51, BK 520)? But these rhetorical questions actually hint at the truth. Ivan is realizing that the lackey, rather than being an offensive but dismissible nuisance, is a dangerous miasma. Within the bounds of politeness imposed by their respective social statuses, Smerdyakov can get away with more and more: “но уж в голосе его даже послышалось нечто твердое и настойчивое, злобное и нагло-вызывающее. Дерзко уставился он в Ивана Федоровича, а у того в первую минуту даже в глазах зарябило” (all the same there was something hard and insistent, malicious and insolently defiant in his voice. He stared boldly at Ivan Fyodorovich, who was even dazed for the first moment; PSS 15: 51, BK 521). Being the object of contempt from someone who is socially and (allegedly) intellectually an inferior is so unexpected that Ivan is lost on his affective map, he has no appropriate emotional reaction.

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[130] As Chloe Kitzinger writes in *Mimetic Lives*, “Ivan’s reaction to the Smerdyakov ‘sitting in his soul’ mirrors his reaction to the devil he later sees sitting in his room. In both cases, the repulsive figure functions to make Ivan aware of what he cannot tolerate in himself, and also to let him imagine the space of his self as separate from it” (149).

[131] Rice argues that it is Smerdyakov’s illness, which isolates and alienates him, while at the same time lending him a “mesmeric power” which attracts and “infects” others by insidious means (252).

In an attempt to desperately restore the power balance of their relationship, Ivan strikes Smerdyakov after the latter says he might have wanted Fyodor Pavlovich dead. Smerdyakov cries. The physical blow, however, does not change the affective relationship between them. Unlike the blow between Zosima and his servant, which is an essential narrative turning point, this blow leads nowhere. Smerdyakov can *ignore* the blow, it does not humiliate him and thus it does not play a part in the master-servant dynamic. Smerdyakov is not a lackey in relation to Ivan anymore. Much to Ivan’s chagrin, when Smerdyakov speaks again, his tone is as contemptuous as ever: “Всего более возмущал Ивана Федоровича этот настойчивый наглый тон, от которого упорно не хотел отступить Смердяков” (What aroused Ivan Fyodorovich's indignation most of all was this insistent, insolent tone, which Smerdyakov stubbornly refused to give up; PSS 15: 52, BK 521). Ivan is more offended by Smerdyakov’s insolent tone than by the accusation of having wanted his father's murder. What is truly intolerable is the feeling of being the object of Smerdyakov's contempt: being the dirty, polluting element. Ivan leaves furious and drowning in a sea of grotesque feelings. As a last resort, since the physical blow amounted to nothing, Ivan tries to resort to the old protection of contempt: "На другое утро он лишь с презрением вспоминал о Смердякове и о насмешках его" (The next morning he [Ivan] recalled Smerdyakov and his jeers merely with contempt**)**. Ivan tries to position himself once again *above* Smerdyakov, and to look at him from that perspective: *pre-zret'.* The more physical and temporal distance there is between them, the more the shield of contempt separates them emotionally: "Чрез несколько дней даже удивлялся, как мог он так мучительно обидеться его подозрениями. Он решился презреть его и забыть" (A few days later he was even surprised that he could have been so painfully offended by his suspicions. He resolved to despise him and forget him; PSS 15: 56, BK 525). Ivan once again tries to convince himself that Smerdyakov's suspicions, *podo-zreniia,* are coming from *below* him and thus he can simply ignore them. He feels surprised by his lack of contempt, *pre-zrenie,* (being above) for Smerdyakov, and by the fact that he could have a strong emotional effect on him. These verbs reveal that Ivan's point of view from *above* and Smerdyakov's from *below* exist at this point only in Ivan's desires. In fact, avoiding Smerdyakov's proximity through contempt only lasts Ivan a month.

By the third encounter, Smerdyakov's social position has become irrelevant. "Один уж этот неожиданный тон, совсем какой-то небывало высокомерный, с которым этот бывший его лакей обращался теперь к нему, был необычен. Такого тона все-таки не было даже и в прошлый раз (The unexpected tone in which his former lackey now addressed him, full of quite unheard-of arrogance, was unusual in itself. There had been no such tone even at their last meeting; PSS 15: 59, BK 528). Smerdyakov is now a *former* lackey not only as a profession and birth, but as far as what affective role he occupies in relation to Ivan. Ivan asks Smerdyakov if Katerina Ivanovna had come to see him: "— Да я и помнить об ней забыл, — презрительно усмехнулся Смердяков и вдруг опять, оборотя лицо к Ивану, уставился на него с каким-то исступленно-ненавистным взглядом, тем самым взглядом, каким глядел на него в то свидание, месяц назад" ('I even forgot to remember about her,' Smerdyakov grinned contemptuously, and suddenly turned his face to Ivan again, fixing him with a sort of wildly hateful look, the same look as he had at their meeting a month earlier; PSS 15: 58, BK 528). Now Smerdyakov finds himself above Ivan, and with *pre-zrenie,* he "forgets to remember" not just about him, but about everything and everyone that is important for him, including, in this case, Katerina Ivanovna. Ivan has now become "not worth talking about." Things go even one step further: Smerdyakov gets irritated that someone who is now contemptible would keep trying to make themselves noticeable in an unseemly way. "— Чего вы всё беспокоитесь? — вдруг уставился на него Смердяков, по не то что с презрением, а почти с какою-то уже гадливостью" ("Why do you keep worrying?" Smerdyakov suddenly stared at him, not so much with contempt now as almost with a sort of repugnance; PSS 15:59, BK 528). Now it is Ivan who is pushing the boundary of contempt for Smerdyakov, who would be content ignoring his former master. He would tolerate his presence, if only Ivan didn't insist on talking about himself (is he the murderer or not?). This subject is contemptible for Smerdyakov and being forced to consider it makes it repugnant.

The final "illumination" that Ivan has comes very late: "—- Ты не глуп, —- проговорил Иван, как бы пораженный; кровь ударила ему в лицо, — я прежде думал, что ты глуп. Ты теперь серьезен! — заметил он, как-то вдруг по-новому глядя на Смердякова. — От гордости вашей думали, что я глуп" ('You're not stupid,' Ivan said as if struck; the blood rushed to his face. 'I used to think you were stupid. You're serious now!' he remarked, suddenly looking at Smerdyakov in some new way. ‘It was your pride made you think I was stupid;’ PSS 15: 68, BK 537). What this moment reveals is that Ivan all this time was looking at Smerdyakov (and himself) through his “pride,” that is, his affective illiteracy, and thus missed some fundamental things.[132] What Smerdyakov summarizes as “pride” (*gordost’*) is a larger affective state that is characterized by affective distance from the world, feeling himself above others, once again, *prezret’*. For Ivan, the clarity regarding Smerdyakov does in a way send him towards a path of overcoming squeamishness: he does face his grotesque desire for his father’s death and, what is more, he declares it in front of people. His illness at this point is so advanced, however, that, as we have seen, the result of this step is unclear. For Smerdyakov, perhaps a moment of reciprocated brotherly love on Ivan’s part would have made a difference, perhaps it would not have. Smerdyakov dies as germaphobe and miasma: cut off emotionally from the world around him and thus subhuman, reduced to the bad smell that his name evokes.

Conclusions

The four brothers Karamazov represent different ways of facing the struggle of the modern individual to find their wholeness in the face of fragmentation. Mitya goes from polluting insect, who only sees shame and depravity in the dirt, to suffering individual looking for God “underground” (PSS 15: 31). He does not become a perfectly moral man, but he is better equipped to look inside, and as a direct consequence, to look around too. Ivan engages in a debilitating struggle to avoid looking inside, afraid both of the indecent things that are buried in the inmost depth of his soul as well as afraid of finding the God inside. By the end, the process of switching places affectively with Smerdyakov, triggered by their excessive proximity, which is also a proximity with Ivan's own self, works in a way as a maieutic process not unlike the one Mitya went through. Because of his illness, however, his fate remains in question. Alyosha overcomes the Karamazov insects that stir storms in his blood, his fear of everything that is decaying (the odor of corruption) and dirty (his lust for women) through genuine curiosity for what's inside himself and others. In this way, he avoids squeamishness and fear and kisses the earth, literally and metaphorically accepting the dirt. Smerdyakov's extreme squeamishness on the other hand makes him into a monster: because he keeps himself at such great distance from the dirt, he is all air and no earth. As miasma, he comes out in the middle of the night and commits a mysterious murder, and after he is gone his nefarious influence still invisibly determines the outcomes of the trial. According to Zosima, nobody should be cast out of the love of the Church, and maybe being brought back into the fold of brotherly love could have infused some humanity back into Pavel Fyodorovich. As things stand, however, Smerdyakov departs as alien and alone as he arrived.

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[132] Meerson maintains that Ivan ignoring Smerdyakov and not recognizing him as a person brings him to self-reification (самоовеществлению), the extreme expression of which in Dostoevsky's world is demonic possession (одержимость) (“Chetvertyi brat,” 581).

Afterword

In this dissertation, I have explored the question of affective illegibility in early psychiatry and Russian Realism between 1840s and 1880s. In each chapter, I have examined how different writers (psychiatrists or novelists) have woven the problem of irrational, grotesque interiority into their texts. When given the opportunity to reveal to the reader the mind, or more importantly, the feelings of the Other, each writer emphasizes the barriers that prevent us from understanding. Psychiatrists offer their expertise and specialized training as a solution to the problem of illegibility, but have to admit the limitations of this approach. In *Oblomov,* Goncharov suggests compassion as the best approach to the emotional complexities and failures of his protagonist. This idea is developed and broadened by Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov.* In this novel, the author insists on the ethical imperative of really looking at others, to see them, no matter how unpleasant or disgusting. What Goncharov introduces as compassion, becomes for Dostoevsky the essence of Christian love. In *Fathers and Children,* Turgenev on the other hand warns us about the dangers of looking too closely at others' and our own unseemly selves. This is one of the fundamental ways in which he differs from his long-term rival, Dostoevsky. When the other characters pry too closely into Bazarov's interiority, they put themselves at risk of affective contagion. Rather than compassion, Turgenev offers the safety of distance from other people and from one's own emotional life as a solution for coping with grotesque affectivities. Finally, Saltykov takes the most pessimistic approach of all. Iudushka has degenerated beyond all feeling, and his interiority is completely empty. This makes him irredeemable and illegible to the other Golovlevs. Despite all their attempts, nobody can either read or accept him in the Golovlev family. There is no more space for compassion, redemption, or even escape.

I consider this dissertation a first step into the examination of nineteenth century theories of the personality and questions of character creation. The limits of this work are evident: many more psychiatric case studies could be added to gain a fuller picture of the narrative strategies adopted by early psychiatrists to wrestle with the limits of their access into their patients' inner emotional worlds. In the same vein, while I have used work from Goncharov, Turgenev, Saltykov-Shchedrin, and Dostoevsky to illustrate illegibility of character in nineteenth century Russian Realism, my analysis could be enriched by examples taken from other authors, such as Nadezhda Khvoshchinskaya, Lev Tolstoy, and Anton Chekhov. Looking even further ahead, one realizes that the illegibility of character remains an open question – it resurfaces in literary character creation over and over again in the Soviet and post-Soviet era. I hope that more capable critics than me will take the ideas I formulate here about grotesque affectivity, affective contagion, and illegibility and apply them to different periods and authors.

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