ISOLATION AND RUSSIAN SHORT FICTION, 1877-1890: GARSHIN, CHEKHOV AND KOROLENKO

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, in the University of Toronto

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Abstract

In this study I consider aspects of isolation in works that V.M. Garshin (1855-1888), A.P. Chekhov (1860-1904) and V.G. Korolenko (1853-1921) wrote during the period 1877-1890. I examine characters in isolation and how their characterisation is presented. My approach is analytical and comparative rather than theoretical. I base my analysis and comparison on two assumptions. The first is that, although these authors may use no equivalents to the English words *isolate, isolated, isolation*, these words and the meanings associated with them best describe particular situations presented in the texts. I regard these texts as explorations of what isolation can be because they supply perspectives that express what it means to be isolated. The second assumption is that the three young authors were concerned with the Russian short story form, with new ways by which to present their art.

In order to indicate the thrust of each author's efforts, I divide the study according to authors, rather than, say, according to types of isolation or types of isolated individuals. This thematic analysis will comment both on the stories as completed wholes and the specific explorations of such a theme. It will comment on Russian literature of the 1880s and discuss its reflection on isolation as well as the reflections on isolation that appear in Russian literature before the late 1870s. My findings indicate characteristics present in the short fiction of that period, traits that may or may not be consistent with those found in short fiction of other periods and
national literatures.
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Note on Transliteration

For the most part I have used the Library of Congress system in transliterating Russian texts. I have made a few modifications: well-known proper names are given in their commonly used forms in the text -- thus Tolstoy instead of Tolstoi, Dostoevsky instead of Dostoevskii -- and indications of soft [ь] and hard signs [ь], noted usually by a single inverted comma ['] and a double one ["], have been eliminated in proper nouns in the text -- thus Gogol instead of Gogol'. I preserve the Library of Congress system in the footnotes and bibliography when I refer to original Russian sources, and in the text when I provide direct translations in square brackets to clarify a usage -- thus "... Toion's decision is unjust [nepravil'no]."

Note on Translation

An English translation of each Russian citation appears in the Appendix at the end of the dissertation. Both textual and footnoted citations are listed according to page number.
Abbreviations

I refer regularly to the following editions throughout this study. When I refer to them, I use the abbreviated form noted in the left column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Edition Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chekhov, Sochineniiia</td>
<td>The 18 volumes that comprise the prose and dramatic writings in Chekhov, PSSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chekhov, Pis'ma</td>
<td>The twelve volumes of letters in Chekhov, PSSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garshin, Sochineniiia</td>
<td>V.M. Garshin, <em>Sochineniiia</em> (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literature, 1938)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gogol, Sochineniiia</td>
<td>N.V. Gogol, <em>Sochineniiia v dvukh tomakh</em> (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literature, 1959)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leskov, SS</td>
<td>N.S. Leskov, <em>Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh</em> (Moskva: Ekran, 1993)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface and Acknowledgments

"Indeed," wrote Dostoevsky in the March 1876 entry to A Writer's Diary, "I keep thinking that we have begun the epoch of universal 'dissociation' [obosobleniia]. All are dissociating themselves [obosobliaiutsia], isolating themselves [uediniaiutsia], everyone wants to invent something of his own, something new and unheard of. Everybody sets aside all those things that used to be common to our thoughts and feelings and begins with his own thoughts and feelings. Everybody wants to begin from the beginning. The links that once united us are broken without regret, and everyone acts on his own accord and finds his only consolation in that."¹ Dostoevsky adds with grieving candour that "everyone is on his own," that people are "compelled [prinuzhdeny] to begin from the beginning, for no one gives them light" and that, because of this, "fresh energies perish."² Dostoevsky is bemoaning the present state of affairs in Russia, yet he further justifies his words when he observes how people have cut themselves off from the past and how they are in danger of destroying the sources that could provide for their future. He emphasises how the individual willingly detaches himself from the whole, yet suffers. He notes, too, that developments in society are harming its unity, yet society fails to guard itself.³ According to Dostoevsky, this temporal and spatial


²Ibid., 396/112 -- emphasis in the original.

³Gary Saul Morson proposes "dissociation" as the unifying theme for A Writer's Diary and, consequently, the structural foundation of the work. See his "Introductory Study: Dostoevsky's Great Experiment," in Dostoevsky, A Writer's Diary, Volume One/1873-1876, 19.
isolation defined Russian society at that moment. He repeatedly returned to the topic of isolation (as active dissociation) in his writing. Yet, throughout the century (and previously) writers had explored why individuals detach themselves, or are detached, from the whole, and the consequences of such detachment.

In the late 1870s the theme of isolation was not new to Russian literature. To that point writers developed the theme as they developed particular literary forms. During the nineteenth-century, short story writers attended to individualizing the character, to characterising him, before concerning themselves with the character in isolation. The personal conflicts and ideals that determine the thoughts and actions of Romantic heroes, such as those in the works of Bestuzhev-Marlinskii and Odoevskii, mark examples of how their authors adopted and implemented aspects of Romantic convention. Pushkin's and Lermontov's stories reflect a definite move toward psychological prose, focusing more on lone characters' mental deliberations and machinations than on what isolates them. Gogol's "Petersburg Stories" render characters alone and detail their conditions, but the heroes often are equally dehumanized so as to form parts of the cityscape. The physiological sketch and writings of the so-called "natural school" offered early glimpses of both the physical conditions that defined a life and the psychological responses of the character who experienced these conditions. Grigorovich's sketches of the countryside and Dostoevsky's stories of poor clerks and dreamers meticulously attended to prosaic conditions and happenings in often bleak lives. A feature of the works' "realism" was the lone character's existence in a world that tended to be exacting. He interacted with the thoughts and emotions that appeared in his consciousness and with the goings-on around him. This literary development continued through the late 1870s and 1880s into present day Russian
literature. Yet in the late 1870s and 1880s Vsevolod Garshin, Anton Chekhov and Vladimir Korolenko approached the subjects of their short prose fiction in particularly compassionate ways that marked singular additions to the evolution of the Russian short story. In their works the theme of isolation consistently appeared.

Except, perhaps, for when they refer to the writing of Dostoevsky and selected writings by Tolstoy, Leskov, Saltykov-Shchedrin and Ostrovskii -- all members of the 1860s generation -- commentators generally separate the prose fiction of the late 1870s and 1880s from the fast moving and constantly rich flow of nineteenth-century Russian literature; they often treat this period as a bit of dry land that the flow overcomes. Recently one reviewer -- quite wrongly, I feel -- denied the period status as noteworthy in the development of Russian literature, volunteering that the period 1880-1895 "is not only transitional but practically bereft of any major works of literature." Like others before him, he denotes this time as an anomaly, allowing the work and grandeur of other periods to overshadow it instead of delving into the reasons for such a consideration. The period may not have provided the quantity and quality of artistic

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4 Andrew Wachtel, "Telling Stories about Russian Literature," Modern Philology vol. 40, no. 3 (February 1993), 402. If major work is synonymous with the term great work as one reviewer recently used it -- "if the term great work means anything, it means a work that continues to have an impact irrespective of specialized knowledge" -- then Wachtel, to my mind, is even more wrong. See Robert Cushman, review of Great Books by David Denby, The Globe and Mail, 12 October 1996, D18. The epithet (epitaph?) "practically bereft" is surely too strong. By elimination Wachtel seems to allocate Tolstoy's short works ("What Men Live By" 1882, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" 1885, The Death of Ivan Il'ich 1886, and "The Three Hermits" 1886, for instance) and drama (The Power of Darkness 1886) of the 1880s to a different level of achievement and avoids regarding Chekov's work of the late 1880s (not to mention remarkable stories from the Chekhonte period) or the stories of Leskov. As I admit, these, along with other works of the period, don't add up to create the same impressive list of lasting achievements in Russian literature that other periods have. Still, it has noteworthy attainments.

5 I will be the first to admit that Wachtel is in estimable company. For example, see Chekhov's letter to Suvorin of 25 November 1892, in which he explains that the writers of his
literary output that so distinguished other periods, movements and schools that formed
the legacy of nineteenth-century Russian literature; still, whose works in any
nineteenth-century literature were able to eclipse the significance of Pushkin’s verse,
Gogol's and Turgenev’s short stories or Dostoevsky’s and Tolstoy’s novels? To say that
a period is transitional or practically bereft of a major work says nothing about the
period’s literary successes or shortcomings and fails to explain what influenced, if not
produced, such results.

Looking closely at a theme like isolation that appears consistently in a national
literature is one way to measure both the extent to which authors explored the theme
and the effects that these efforts had on literary form. Such a broad examination is my
objective here.

In this study I consider aspects of isolation in works that V.M. Garshin (1855-
1888), A.P. Chekhov (1860-1904) and V.G. Korolenko (1853-1921) wrote during the
period 1877-1890. I examine characters in isolation and how their characterisation is
presented. My approach is analytical and comparative rather than theoretical. I base
my analysis and comparison on two assumptions. The first is that, although these
authors may use no equivalents to the English words *isolate*, *isolated*, *isolation*, these
words and the meanings associated with them best describe particular situations
presented in the texts. I regard these texts as explorations of what isolation can be
because they supply perspectives that express what it means to be isolated. The second

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generation offer readers “lemonade” rather than “spirit,” and that “for now it would be rash to
expect from us something that is actually sensible [putnogo], regardless of whether we are
talented.” Chekhov, *Pis’ma*, 5: 132-134. See also D.S. Merezhkovskii, “O prichinakh upadka i o
novykh techeniiakh sovremennoi russkoii literatury” 1893, in the collection of his essays *Estetika
i kritika v dvukh tomakh* (Moskva: Iskusstvo/Khar’kov: Folio, 1994), I: 186 and D.S. Mirsky,
*A History of Russian Literature from Its Beginnings to 1900*, Francis J. Whitfield, ed. (New
assumption is that the three young authors were concerned with the Russian short story form, with new ways by which to present their art.

By underlining these texts as stories of isolation I am not claiming that this theme is the principle or "dominant," to borrow a term, that governs all other components of the work.⁶ To be sure, I have chosen to interpret and analyse how this theme is presented; these are the chief tasks that govern how I read these stories. I submit that these stories present the theme of isolation as clearly, if not more clearly, than other works that these authors wrote and, more importantly, that Garshin, Chekhov and Korolenko incorporate the theme into their works in ways that highlight elements of their art. It follows that the portrayal of this theme is a significant aspect of these stories and that the authors directed their efforts at making the stories' compositions contribute to this presentation. In order to indicate the thrust of each author's efforts, I have divided the study according to authors, rather than, say, according to types of isolation or types of isolated individuals. Often, to examine the presentation of the relationship between hero and context, my analysis considers "point of view" in the stories. Such an approach helps to determine how the stories define and represent the characters' relationships with themselves and others. Individual positions conflict to produce isolation physically and relationally.⁷ We learn of the isolation not exclusively from what the narrator or character reveals, but also from how point of

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view affects the story's style.

This study is intensive. I have selected from a period in the development of Russian modern literature specific works of short prose fiction. And from those works I have chosen one aspect, a feature that refers to a character or group alone in a specific setting. Choosing the works of Garshin, Chekhov and Korolenko and, specifically, the short story as the literary form on which to focus, suits a study of isolation, at least an introductory one. The writers were contemporaries writing in much the same form. They were similarly subject to the reverberations of the literary developments and socio-political adjustments in Russia of the 1880s, a period in Russian history of transition, uncertainty and looking inward. To be sure, they were not the only writers -- young or old -- of this period. But, for reasons of space (and time) I have limited this study to an examination of their work. This thematic analysis of their works will comment both on the stories as completed wholes and the specific explorations of such a theme. It will comment on the literature of the 1880s and distinguish its reflection on isolation from that of other periods.

The murky question of how to define the role that short fiction played in Russian literature of the 1880s is outside the scope of this study. Nonetheless, my findings will reflect one aspect of that period's literature and will indicate characteristics present in the short fiction of that period, traits that may or may not be consistent with those found in short fiction of other periods and national literatures.

As regards the form of short fiction or the short story particularly, I work from two assumptions: Russian short fiction continued to be developed and to develop no matter how great were the shadows cast around and on it by the novel, verse forms and foreign
While not announcing a shared belief with, or blind faith in, Frank O'Connor when he proposes that "there is in the short story at its most characteristic something we do not often find in the novel -- an intense awareness of human loneliness," I may arrive at this conclusion. Still, I also hope to show that, for many fictional characters, being alone is not always synonymous with being lonely. More directly, I hope to show that for authors, to portray isolation is to be faced with many possibilities. Different writers explore isolation in different manners.

Chapters One and Two establish more concretely the scope, approach and goals of this study. I start from outside Russian literature to form my definitions and then present a summary of selected Russian short fiction that was written in the four decades prior to the 1880s. Chapter One distinguishes what isolation might mean and proposes that short fiction is an adequate medium for presenting this theme. Chapter Two is an overview of what can be referred to as the "isolation short story in Russia." I look specifically at stories written between 1835 and 1880. Chapters Three, Four and Five, the Garshin, Chekhov and Korolenko sections, are of much the same pattern: I briefly describe the author's writing career during the 1880s; then, I summarise generally the

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8 Thus, I disagree with one aspect of Boris Eikhenbaum's too general statement that "[t]he novel and the short story are forms not only different in kind but inherently at odds, and for that reason are never found being developed simultaneously and with equal intensity in any one literature" (my emphasis). See his "O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story," I.R. Titunik, trans., in Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views, Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska, eds. (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1978), 231. The article was written in 1925. For the original see "O. Genri i teoriia novelly," in Literatura. Teoriia, kritika, polemika (Leningrad: Priboi, 1927), 171.

place of isolation and related conditions in the author's work; finally, I discuss whether
certain works are more representative "isolation stories" in each writer's oeuvre. This
being said, the Chekhov chapter is a bit different from the Garshin and Korolenko
chapters. While I propose that isolation plays a definable role in the works of Garshin
and Korolenko, among the large variety of characters and conditions that Chekhov
treated in his work of the 1880s, isolation and similar outcomes appear too often to
allow me to define such a role for isolation in Chekhov's work. I can say with
confidence that isolation is likely, even usual, in Chekhov's stories, and in those of his
works that portray isolation, Chekhov provides a range of types, applications of, and
responses to isolation. In that chapter I try to provide an indication of that range.

Sections of Chapter Three were presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian
Association of Slavists, Montreal 1995, the conference "Russian Literature & Society
between Two Wars," Toronto 1995, and the annual meeting of the American Association
of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages, Chicago 1995. Sections of Chapter
Four were presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Teachers of
Slavic and East European Languages, Washington 1996, and the 35th Anniversary
Conference of the Central Slavic Association, Lawrence, Kansas 1997. Sections of
Chapter Five were presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Association of
Slavists, Ottawa 1998. In addition, various parts of this study have been presented at
the Faculty-Graduate Student Colloquium Series of the Department of Slavic Languages
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One: Isolation and Short Fiction

Isolation

Stories from all times and from all peoples, it seems, have presented isolation. Consider the following selections.

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit [of God] into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will give his angels charge of you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Begone, Satan! for it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him (Matthew 4. 1-11).

I walked about on the shore, lifting up my hands, and my whole being, as I may say, wrapt up in the contemplation of my deliverance, making a thousand gestures and motions which I cannot describe, reflecting upon all my comrades that were drowned, and that there should not be one soul saved but my self; for, as for them, I never saw them afterwards, or any sign of them, except three of their hats, one cap, and two shoes that were not fellows.

I cast my eyes to the stranded vessel, when the breach and froth of the sea being so big, I could hardly see it, it lay so far off, and considered, Lord! how was it possible I could get on shore?

After I had solaced my mind with the comfortable part of my condition, I began to look round me to see what kind of place I was in, and what was next to be done, and I soon found my comforts abate, at that in a word I had a dreadful deliverance:...

(Robinson Crusoe).

Ill humor and listlessness became more and more deeply rooted in Werther’s soul.

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until finally they took possession of his entire personality. The harmony of his spirit was utterly destroyed, and an inner passion and vehemence that confused all the forces of his nature resulted in the most objectionable effects, leaving him in the end with nothing but a feeling of exhaustion out of which he tried to rise with an even greater fear than he had felt when previously seeking to combat his misery. His anxiety destroyed all the remaining forces of his intellect, his liveliness, his wit; he became sorry company, waxing ever more unfortunate and unjust as he became increasingly unhappy....

Everything disagreeable that had ever happened to him in his active life -- his grievance against the embassy, every failure that had hurt him -- now ran rampant through his tormented mind. He let it justify his idleness, he felt cut off from all hope of ever again being able to regain a firm grip on life. Thus he finally drew closer to his sad end, lost in a fantastic sensitivity and infinite passion, in the eternal monotony of a sad intercourse with the gracious and beloved creature whose inner repose he disturbed, stormy in the powers that were left him, working them off with no goal, no prospects (The Sorrows of Young Werther).²

These excerpts share something more than being taken from famous works. They portray individuals separated from a definable whole and locked into a limiting surrounding that is specified by its own apparent rules and the manner in which it focuses or restricts the individual’s actions. For these moments the individual can be said to be in isolation. Despite the word isolation not appearing in any of these texts it is reasonable to say that a context arises that can be best described by the word isolation.

Some force, physical or abstract, separates each individual from his usual environment, be it a material space or his mental consciousness of it. As if His temptation is a planned and necessary trial, Jesus is taken by the Spirit to be tempted in the wilderness and then angels welcome Him on His return. The grammatical construction “were drowned” suggests that something killed Crusoe’s mates. As well, “saved” derives from a transitive verb; something kept Crusoe from death and delivered

him to the island. Feelings from his heart overcome Werther and cause him to act in ways that seem new to others and the results of which seem no longer to touch him. Jesus withstands the challenges of his isolation, Crusoe prepares to contend with them, and Werther falls prey to their powers.

The narrative approach in each instance identifies the particular type of isolation -- spiritual, physical and emotional -- and underscores the role of isolation for the work. St Matthew gives only one side of the experiencing, providing no comment on the devil’s taking part in this encounter. St Matthew reveals his focus with two elaborations: “hunger” speaks on Jesus’s physical challenges and “behold” emphasises His successful enduring of the temptation. The reader is to sense more fully the effect of this encounter -- Jesus’s isolation -- on Jesus, rather than on the devil or on both of them equally.

The transition from presenting characters as types to revealing them as individuals highlights the evolution of modern literature from its Medieval roots. Giving individual lives to characters released them from accepted models and started on a fresh path the possibility of their more detailed development. Finer individuation provided also for more particular depictions of isolation. The writings of Defoe and Goethe are prime examples.

The fullness of Crusoe’s situation is undeniable. Details that enumerate Crusoe’s movements, feelings and emotions pack his recollections of his first steps on the new shore. He places himself in the middle of extremes and, by doing so, confirms his awareness of his predicament and the magnitude of his apparent isolation. The

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juxtapositions in each sentence bolster this realisation: physical (lifting hands) versus mental (wrapt up in contemplation), comrades versus self, drowned versus saved, top (hats, cap) versus bottom (shoes), the vessel at sea versus his position on shore, solace versus dreadful deliverance, now (comfortable condition) versus future (what was next). The story is about transforming a condition of newness and loss into a survivable world. As is shown later in the novel, every difficulty that he overcomes displays Crusoe's resourcefulness. Parallel to this development, as a sign of his ability to cope with and defeat new forces, each new difficulty further characterises his isolation. Isolation is his world, his opposition and his foil.

At the point of the excerpt in Goethe's story, Werther is unable to continue his letter writing. The Editor, revealing omniscient knowledge, relays the hero's inner feelings and their outer consequences for Werther and those with whom he spent time. The narrator presents Werther's state in a brief, but gradual progression -- from "ill humor and listlessness" to Werther's drawing closer to his "sad end." His suffering seems insurmountable because he sees no future. He sees no escape from the present force.

Werther is always subject to the power of his heart. The reactions it signals are wholly personal and difficult to describe with words. The extent to which his heart controls and isolates him has repercussions for the narrative mode, too. At times, like the one above, the narrator takes over to account for Werther's gaps in correspondence. Walter Reed suggests convincingly that "Werther has outgrown the limits of the epistolary novel. The Editor, in the beginning simply a device, becomes an important mediating and distancing presence as Werther's 'true and innermost motives' become a
mystery.” Isolated by the feelings of his heart, Werther succumbs, unable to locate resources from a force that cannot be escaped because it cannot be described.

I chose these texts for two reasons: to show the close, complementary interaction between the theme and narratives and to introduce what can be meant by isolation, both actually -- in the fictional world -- and for the literary work. Isolation, in a spiritual, physical and emotional sense, plays a major part in these fragments, but to take the word's meaning in any or all of these works alone is to assert select definitions and explanations. Isolation can be more broadly and more specifically defined. And, inasmuch as these are excerpts, they, too, are isolated from their roles in greater wholes. For instance, as an example of the constant chronicling of Jesus's responses to new situations, this happening emphasises the consistency of Jesus's actions. Isolation, when Jesus is alone to face the devil, comes to resemble all other contexts that He encounters; it is but one more test for Jesus and one more instance in which the same belief and instruction help Him to overcome another challenge. For Crusoe's world, too, this is a stage -- the opening one -- in the novel. It establishes the early parameters of his challenge from which the remainder of the novel's action will develop. For Werther's story, this section marks his end, a finish that seems likely only in the context of the fictional life that the earlier part of the novel comprises. The theme of

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5As "parts" these excerpts can be seen to hold defined positions in theoretical models of larger works. See M.M. Bakhtin, "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)," in his Speech Genres and Other Late Essays, Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, eds., Vern McGee, trans. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986). Aspects of The Gospel According to Matthew might be assigned to Bakhtin's definition of the "novel of ordeal" (11-13), especially the second subcategory which "is based on the idea of testing a holy man through suffering and temptation" (13). Defoe's novel shares many traits with the Bildungsroman as Bakhtin broadly defines it in the early part of his essay
isolation in larger works may not hold the same meaning in a short story. First, however, what, in essence, might isolation mean?

Isolation implies a position separate from a whole and presupposes that a force secludes the isolated thing. To isolate means to "place or set apart or alone; [to] cause to stand alone or detached, separated from or unconnected with other things or persons." As straightforward as this seems, the varieties of isolation are endless, and the results are particular to each experience. The act is singled out. And, clearly, the verb is transitive. The meaning is flexible as to allow the agent and object of isolating to be one and the same or different. I am isolated if I move to a secluded cottage for quiet and limited distractions to finish my dissertation or if my family locks me away in a monastery cell until the work is completed. Alternatively, I may be so overcome by my task that I block out the world around me. In each case the result is the same: I am isolated. I am "locked in" and kept at bay for those moments. Some force detaches me from my usual participation in the whole. This happens for different reasons.

There are particular causes and motives for creating, or that create, isolation. People seek isolation to think, to rest, to recover. And, similarly, they are isolated to consider their actions, to prepare for an event, and to heal their suffering body, mind or soul. Isolation can be the condition assigned to someone as a reward or punishment;

(19-25). Bakhtin shows that Goethe's conception of historical time signifies the change from his more romantic to his more realistic writings (or, earlier to later writings). In the more romantic works (i.e., Werther) the past clouds the present and removes any possible link to a future time. The merging of the past and present prevail, creating a "ghostly" feeling. See pages 35-36, 41-42.

it can be the norm or an exceptional circumstance. An individual can choose isolation and can be isolated by forces outside his control. Obviously, isolation can be active and passive. The separation is not just physical, but can be social and mental, too. The certainties are that one part is made to be separate and that that part has roots in the whole. The causes, motives and definition of each particular isolation colour the separation.7

To be in isolation should not be seen as a comment on the individual's difference or otherness. Separation and being alone are the priorities. Neither the whole nor the isolated one can be understood unquestionably to portray traits generally accepted as normal, reasonable or healthy. It follows that as a descriptive term isolation carries neither positive nor negative connotations. These colourings depend on the circumstances of the specific isolation. In his book The Autonomy of the Self from Richardson to Huysmans Frederick Garber rightly notes that "[s]eparateness is always equivocal, ambivalence is not peripheral or occasional but central and persistent."8 I might add that a sense of community or inclusion and its occasional by-products, such as obligation and responsibility, also awaken contrasting if not conflicting attitudes. And, as the knowledge of belonging can constantly remind the individual of his surroundings, similarly, isolation forces him to face his immediate environment. But in the latter case the contending is done alone. The challenges might be physical or mental and raise unexpected concerns. They may test his ability to cope or free him to relax. Isolation may cause him to try to compensate for the detachment by pursuing other

7 On these and subsequent elaborations I have found one work especially instructive, Anthony Storr's Solitude (London: Flamingo, 1989).

challenges or by trying to recreate the surroundings to which he is used. Regardless of his needs and wants, isolation can command the individual's attention or free him from demands. Isolation cannot be mistaken for inactivity or purposelessness. But, certainly, it can lead to inactivity and need not be continually stimulating.

Isolation need not be restrictive or confining. It can produce negative and positive results. It can alter behaviour and cause the isolated one to act in new ways. As a result, it can have negative effects on mental functioning, promote a deadening or lethargy, or inspire creative development. The future may show that isolation can produce an impaired ability to socialize or help to develop an individual's confidence in himself and others.

The isolated one may consider the past and the future, but his being in the present -- his contending with his "nowness" -- prompts such reflections. In any situation, at some level, there is a form of interaction, be it, for instance, between the individual and his physical environment or an individual alone with his thoughts; he may be forced to wrestle with his conscience or evaluate his actions. Consequently, isolation can define types of activities and provide for the fulfilment of specific purposes.

Isolate, isolated and isolation have a number of potential synonyms and conditions of meaning. The understanding that I want to incorporate for my analysis is more limited and will become clearer if I eliminate some shared meanings. To be an outsider, stranger or alien is not always to be isolated. These three are inherent labels that define those individuals; whereas, the past passive modifier isolated indicates that the action of isolating has been carried out on the individual, even if he isolates himself. The outsider, stranger and alien are read as being separate, but not that any
force has established this separation. From the point of view that labels them, there is no sense that they have been made to be apart. An outsider, stranger or alien can be spotted readily, but the isolated one is isolated on account of an earlier stage of association and separation. This implies a temporal distinction that allows for the process of isolation to occur. Despite the isolated individual being alone, he at one time belonged to, or was known to, the whole or has roots that link him with the original part. The definition stresses that to isolate is to take away from the larger unit. To be sure, outsiders, strangers and aliens can be isolated; each can be separate from a whole. But while the isolated one was once part of it, the outsider, stranger or alien have different roots. I couldn't isolate a stranger or alien from my group -- I could from a larger group of strangers or aliens -- but I could confine, estrange or alienate him.

This being said, to be separated from some unit can mean to be isolated, to be estranged or to be alienated. Yet, the latter two stress a sense of distance from the whole or a rupturing or severing of the initial bond and an understanding that that bond can never be the same. Isolation never fully breaks the bond. For instance, when I go into the hospital to have a deep cut in my hand treated by cleaning and stitching, the medical staff does not estrange or alienate that hand (I hope). They isolate it by placing a sheet over the rest of my arm, but do not separate it from my body in the meanings of estrange or alienate. It is made to be separate, but is not separated from

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9Dostoevsky argued the same in the *A Writer's Diary* entry cited in the Preface. I quote his point at length. "Прибавлю, однако, что если все теперь "сами от себя и сами по себе", то не без связи же, однако, и с предыдущим. Напротив, связь эта должна существовать непременно, хотя бы и все казалось разрозненным и друг друга не понимающим, и проследить эту связь всего бы любопытнее. Одним словом, хоть и старо сравнение, но наше русское интеллигентное общество всего более напоминает собою тот древний пучок прутьев, который только и крепок, пока пруты связаны вместе, но чуть лишь расторопнут связь, то весь пучок разлетится на множество чрезвычайно слабых ветвей, которые разнесет первый ветер" (Dostoevskii, *Dnevnik pisatelia za 1876 god*, 115).
the whole. Certainly, Jesus and Crusoe are both separate and separated from their wholes, but they are neither alienated nor estranged. In this instance they are only isolated. Despite the fact that they are alone, their activities in isolation are conditioned by ties to their roots, not just their present surroundings. This spatial detachment at once marks the part as separate, but does not eliminate the fact that it shared common ground with the whole.

I suggest, too, that there is something spatial -- albeit metaphorically -- (even if it is temporary) implied when a person who is lost in thought is referred to as being "away with the birds." He isn’t completely there despite his physical presence; he isn’t interacting as he usually might. He is preoccupied, perhaps caused to take part in the world differently. For instance, Werther is kept from being his usual self, he is kept from partaking in the world as he usually would. He is not isolated physically from others, but certain indescribable feelings lock him into a different sense of being that makes him act differently and without attention. Another example will help to clarify this understanding: I quote two lines from a scene late in Alan Bennett’s play The Madness of George III. The King has been suffering from porphyria and considered to be mad. As part of his therapy, following a gradual improvement, he has been reading King Lear with, among others, the Lord Chancellor, Thurlow, when Thurlow observes signs of wellness in the King.

Thurlow: Your Majesty seems more yourself.
King: Do I? Yes, I do. I have always been myself even when I was ill. Only now I seem myself. That’s the important thing. I have remembered how to seem.¹⁰

¹⁰Alan Bennett, The Madness of George III (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1992), 81-82.
During his illness the King had been locked into a sense of being that distanced him from his usual participation in the goings-on around him. He was made to be separate; he was made to not "seem" himself. He clarifies that he -- the united physical, mental, and spiritual elements that form his self -- had always potentially been able to take part; he had always been himself. He was, however, unable to overcome the forces of his illness that would allow him to attain that usual sense of being. The illness isolated elements of that self so that he could not seem to be it, so that he could not appear to himself and others to be it. In these cases, then, the actions of Jesus, Crusoe and Werther (and the King) exemplify that isolation is not solely a sequestering or limiting, but is a world of new conditions and possibilities.

The dictionary definition of *isolate* communicates what that specific act means. My elaborations of the definition extend this meaning to possible contexts and possible human experiences: I have suggested what it might mean to be isolated and what might arise out of such circumstances. With this information at hand we could make predictions of what an individual might say, think or do in isolation. If, for instance, we were watching such a person secretly from afar, we would not need an idea of his mental life either to be able to guess that he will face certain choices and demands or to be able to generalise about what he will tend to do. Yet, we would not know the fuller effect the context has on him or what thoughts he has while in isolation.¹¹

The examples of short fictional prose that I propose to examine generate such an effect and make us privy to the conscious and, in some cases, unconscious processes of

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the character's mind. I stress, again, that while these authors may use no equivalents to *isolate*, *isolated* and *isolation*, I believe there are situations presented in the texts that are best described by these words and the meanings associated with them. The views provided on these situations specify given contexts and characters in isolation. Keying on the isolated individual provides intensive reflection on that specific temperament, on how that individual’s impressions are filtered and his ideas developed or expressed. Such focus on an individual allows insight to the effect on him of the spontaneous potential of every moment -- the chance of mundane routines, unpredictable problems and unexpected joys -- and whether the character is receptive and empathetic to it. The narrative relays discontent and acceptance and shows how an imagination reacts to such responses. It gives the inner as well as the outer reaction, the individual as well as the general understanding. In comparison with the rigid definition and its elaborations, the fictional account is more likely to reveal the inner life of the character.\footnote{On the distinction of fiction see, among others, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren’s differentiation between historical truth -- “factual truth, truth in specific detail of time and place”-- “philosophic truth: conceptual, propositional, general,” and imaginative literature, which is “‘fiction,’ a lie,” in *Theory of Literature*, 3rd ed. (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 212-213 and David Lodge’s “The Novelist at the Crossroads,” where he discusses the difference between empirical and fictional narrative, in his *The Novelist at the Crossroads and Other Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London and New York: ARK Paperbacks, 1986), 3-34.} This life as it exists in isolation, revealed in the character’s thoughts, reflections, words and actions, and expressed by the narrator or character himself, concerns me here.

Works of fiction also reveal aspects of their authors’ creative powers. They are flavoured and restricted by the author’s ability to realise in written form what he first perceives to be the image of his art. A short story (like any art object and its medium) is a *recreation* in written form of that perception as well as an artistic *creation*; it is the
material likeness for the author and the new work for the readers. In the works I have chosen to examine, Garshin, Chekhov and Korolenko, whether they intended to or not, have found and made isolation to be an integral part of their stories. To speak of the works collectively, the shared theme draws them together while, through its realisations in singular efforts, setting them apart. Each writer worked predominantly with the same type of material object, the literary form commonly referred to as the short story. That is, except for Chekhov's "The Hunting Party" ["Drama na okhote" 1884-85], before 1890 neither Garshin, Chekhov nor Korolenko had written a story of more than ninety-two pages, works I will refer to, and read, as short stories.\footnote{Chekhov's "The Steppe" ["Step"] appeared in Northern Herald no. 3 (1888), 75-167. ("The Shooting Party" comprises one hundred seventy-six pages.) I intentionally am not distinguishing the differences and likenesses between what is referred to by the Russian terms povest', rasskaz and novella. The distinctions are not relevant to this study. As a precedent see Eva Kagan-Kans's entry "Short Story" in Handbook of Russian Literature, Victor Terras, ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 410. For a description of the difficulty in making clear distinctions between these terms, see the editor's "Introduction" in B.S. Meilakh, ed., Russkaia povest' XIX veka. Istorii i problematika zhanra (Leningrad: Nauka, 1973), 4-9.}

\begin{quote}
Short Fiction
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I took the excerpts I presented from larger works, The Bible, The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe and The Sorrows of Young Werther, none of which I consider a short story. These fragments help to define isolation but cannot be readily applied as models to the stories I intend to examine; as parts of larger texts they are elements belonging to different sets of conventions. In accord with these sets of conventions the elements infer certain meanings to the original texts.\footnote{I am borrowing from Gary Saul Morson, The Boundaries of Genre. Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 46. "Meaning" relates to content and form.} These meanings, perhaps, are not readily
transferable to the short story.

Nonetheless, in these representations broad consistencies appear that provide criteria from which can be identified short stories that reflect isolation as a central theme. For my purposes the following points may be designated:

1) Reference will be made to a separating or locking in, be it physical or abstract -- social or mental -- intentional or unintentional, that isolates the individual from the whole. A temporal association that distinguishes the time of belonging from that of isolation may further clarify the isolation.

2) An active participant in the fictional world, either the central character or a secondary one, will acknowledge the isolation.

3) A form of interaction, if not dialogue, between the isolated character and the context in which he finds himself will be central to the goings-on of the story.

Encountered through the general formal traits or resemblances that short stories embody, these criteria emerge large. Some of the earliest and most famous comments on the traits and resemblances of short fiction, particularly the tale, were written by Edgar Allan Poe in the mid-nineteenth century.

In reviews and essays that Edgar Poe wrote during the 1840s, he stresses unity of impression and totality of effect as fundamental attributes for the form of the tale. Since that time critics and short story writers have sought to identify how these results are brought about and, in aiming for, or working within, such outcomes, at what broad themes or topics the short story consistently arrives.15 Poe's guidelines and ideals are

15I will quote specifically from Poe's reviews of Night and Morning: A Novel by Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Twice-Told Tales by Nathaniel Hawthorne, which appeared in 1841 and 1842 respectively, and his short essay “The Philosophy of Composition” (1846). I refer to the reviews and essay as they appear in Edgar Allan Poe, Representative Selections, Margaret A. Herton and Hardin Craig, eds. (New York American Book Co., 1933), 303-317, 357-364 and 365-377.
not rigid and his arguments are not infallible.\textsuperscript{16} They do, however, mark an early effort to define what is meant by \textit{tale or short story} and, therefore, seem a legitimate source from which to examine the mix of "what is said" with "how it is said" in short prose fiction.

Poe places limitations on the tale that complement the effects that such a work brings about.\textsuperscript{17} He speaks of the unity of impression as a product of those literary works which can be read at one sitting (367). Of the highest art forms he mentions the "short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal" (359). Poe feels that to extend a reading of \textit{almost all classes of composition} beyond a single sitting is to tempt losing the unity of effect or impression. This is not to say that perseverence would not show a work to be a fine one, but that during an extended reading the original unity of impression for the reader may more likely be lost or disrupted. On plot Poe refers to "that in which no part can be displaced without ruin to the whole" (305). His similar understandings of unity and plot propose a wholeness of force and intensity. The author achieves this intensity, Poe suggests, if he limits in a work the number of incidents that might demand particular attention and feeling. To ask for too much adjustment on the reader's part is to risk taking away from unity of effect (308-309). While not inclined to name the types of incidents or topics presented


in stories, Poe does set stringent standards for the storyteller. For Poe the truth of a reading is the truth of the single tone or impression affected by the reading.

Critics contest Poe's comments not because he has spoken wrongly, but because his words are taken too literally or accepted as fact. For instance, James Cooper Lawrence does not disagree with Poe, but disagrees with those who "accept Poe's dictum."18 "Poe's rules," Lawrence objects, "applied only to one class of short stories, those told to produce a single effect."19 Moreover, there is more to Poe's words than an easy reading might suggest. Poe's understandings of the short story imply formal characteristics but shy from mentioning them. Certainly he is thinking about brevity and action when he talks about sitting-times and unity of effect.20 What Poe implied, others have underlined in their discussions of short fiction.

Generally speaking, a brief outline of formal traits shared by short stories might be summarised by the following points. As a condition of the form's relative brevity the short story commonly provides a succinct or intense elaboration of the main "constituents" of prose fiction -- plot, characterization and setting --21 the presentation

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19Ibid., 68. Eikhenbaum seems to provide a definition for only one class of short story, too, when he suggests that: "'Short story' is a term referring exclusively to plot, one assuming a combination of two conditions: small [malyi] size and the impact of plot on the ending [siuzhetnoe udarenie v kontse]" (Italics in the Russian original but not in the English translation. "O. Genri i teoriia novelly" 171/"O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story" 231-232).

20Mary Rohrberger's sense of the word "brevity" is, I think, more accurate for a general discussion of the short story than a definition that explains quantity of pages. She takes "brevity" to be a "relative term, applying more to the limits of the author's conception than to any actual page length." See her "The Short Story: A Proposed Definition" (1966), in Short Story Theories. Charles E. May, ed. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1976), 80.

21These "constituents" are enumerated by Wellek and Warren 216. Elaborating slightly, Seymour Chatman speaks of the necessary components of a narrative and argues, on behalf of
of which is specified by each storyteller's attention to exposition, development, and drama, and which are reflected in the work's careful patterning and representative qualities. Because time tends to be less influential in short forms (in anecdotes or sketches, say, unlike in the novel), an incident is more often an unplanned happening than the product of extensive development or intricate unveilings, and is likely to play a fundamental part in the goings-on of the story. Story time is less liable to shape characters; they are presented in limited situations rather than through a process of unfolding. Routinely, few settings make up a short story, a fact that suggests closer scrutiny is drawn to each detail and to each character's lone interaction with that space and moment. Such attention might deem the slightest excess of detail to be a technical flaw. Presented within such rigorous requirements, it is not unlikely for a short story to be built around a specific theme.

structuralist theory, "that each narrative has two parts: a story (histoire), the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting); and a discourse (discours), that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated." See his Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 19. In addition he shows how these distinctions are similar to those made by Aristotle, the Russian formalists and French structuralists (19-20).

22O'Connor 26.

23Gullason convincingly shows that the lesser influence of time does not mean that the incidents that occur in the present time of the short story's action cannot be reflective of the past and present and suggest a sense of continuing life; the device of "telescoping," in the given instance, achieves this effect. See his brief reading of Chekhov's "Gooseberries" in "The Short Story: An Underrated Art," 25-28.

24Cf. Kramer, The Chameleon and the Dream, 13. "The short story proceeds primarily through situation and incident towards the same goal -- a state of temporal stasis, in which a thing or person is defined and revealed."

Poe’s comments anticipate many of the formal characteristics outlined above. They speak equally to the truth of a character in a short story, or, more accurately, to the truth of the moments that comprise the story and that, for those instances, define the world of the story and its character. Such observations emphasise both how the short story succeeds in portraying a character alone and how elements of the story pinpoint this individual’s being alone. Because these “specific times” are few, their inclusion is significant, if not foremost, in the story. Inevitably this portrayal implies the character’s loneness by stressing his lone interaction with the circumstances that create that moment.26

Poe’s comments and the observations of others provide a brief and general outline of traits common to short fiction and short stories, particularly. As they relate to nineteenth-century short fiction, such comments, perhaps, could only be general. At the time of writing such works in Russia, for instance, questions of genre or form led frequently to debatable answers from prose writers and critics.27 But, in their discussions of short fiction some of these commentators touched on points raised here, revealing just that general understanding offered above, in addition to their tendency to expect of prose fiction a marked social component.

In his 1835 article “On the Russian Short Story and the Short Stories of Mr


27Leskov admitted this in a letter of 1 June 1877: “в наше время -- критического бессмыслия в понятиях самих писателей о форме их произведений, воцарился невообразимый хаос. «Хочу, назову романом, хочу, назову повестью -- так и будет». И они думают, что это так и есть, как они назвали. Между тем, конечно, это не так...” N.S. Leskov, Sobranie sochinenii v odinnadtsati tomakh (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1956-1958), 10: 450.
Gogol” [О русской повести и повестях г. Гоголя], 28 Vissarion Belinsky, perhaps the most important Russian journalist of the 1830s and 1840s, provides an early review of the Russian short story. 29 It’s a large article in which Belinsky also reviews Gogol’s “Arabeski” and “Mirgorod Tales” with an eye toward determining a form that can best bear a national Russian literature. 30 In “On the Russian Short Story,” then, Belinsky announces the arrival of Gogol, the tenuous establishment of a national literature, and the emergence in Russia of the short story as a particular form of prose fiction. The last of these points concerns me here, but they all are points to which Belinsky returns in later essays. 31

In writings of 1846 and 1847, for example, he continues to praise Gogol’s works for their truthful speaking to everyday Russian reality. 32 More generally, though, for


29 I stress immediately that I am concerned with the sense in which the short story was understood in Russian in the early nineteenth century. Belinsky’s article is a noteworthy indicator. For a brief review of Belinsky’s strengths and weaknesses as a journalist and critic, see Mirsky 175.

30 Robert Maguire recently observed that in this essay Belinsky reiterates his earlier comments that Russia in fact still could not claim an established national literature. Robert A. Maguire, Exploring Gogol (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 137-138. Belinsky’s earlier comments are from “Literary Reveries” [Литературные мечтания 1834].

31 I don’t mean to suggest that Belinsky’s thought developed linearly or that it was unchanging. Commentary on his work and thought generally divides their direction into three overlapping periods -- 1834-1839, 1839-1841, 1841-1848 -- with the middle period viewed as a divergence. On the distinction of the middle period see Herbert E. Bowman, Vissarion Belinski, 1811-1848: A Study in the Origins of Social Criticism in Russia (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), especially Chapter Five, “The Rationalization of Reality (1836-1841),” 81-139 and Joseph Frank, Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 119-123.

Belinsky, the novel’s and short story’s concern with everyday, specifically, Russian life is their hallmark and particular talent. They are art forms capable of maintaining their artistic merit while portraying the most prosaic of life’s moments.

Роман и повесть, даже изображая самую обыкновенную и пошлую прозу житейского быта, могут быть представителями крайних пределов искусства, высшего творчества; с другой стороны, отражаая в себе только избранные, высокие мгновения жизни, они могут быть лишены всякой поэзии, всякого искусства... Это самый широкий, всеобъемлющий род поэзии; в нем талант чувствует себя безгранично свободным. В нем соединяются все другие роды поэзии -- и лирика как излияние чувств автора по поводу описываемого им события, и драматизм как более яркий и рельефный способ заставлять высказываться данные характеры. Отступления, рассуждения, дидактика, нетерпимые в других родах поэзии, в романе и повести могут иметь законное место. Роман и повесть дают полный простор писателю в отношении преобладающего свойства его таланта, характера, вкуса, направления и т. д.33

That Belinsky sees the novel and short story as malleable speaks to the minimal discussion at that time on prose form as an artistic measure. He is content to discuss generally the potential and development of prose as an expression of civic-mindedness, but he does place emphasis on event, character, and everyday life -- basic components of prose fiction.

In “On the Russian Short Story” Belinsky refers to the novel and short story collectively, proposing that the short story arrived with the novel [povest’, prishedshaia umeste s nim [romanom]].34 The short story is, in his eyes, a microcosm of the novel. Citing from memory, Belinsky agrees with an earlier reviewer that “повесть есть

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Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov, 81; and “Письмо к Н.В. Гоголю” in Belinsky, SS, VIII: 282 [“Letter to N.V. Gogol” (1847), in Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov, 85].

33Взгляд на русскую литературу 1847 года. Статья вторая и последняя, VIII: 371.

34“On the Russian Short Story,” I: 140. As mentioned, I don’t want to enter a discussion on the distinction between povest’ and rasskaz. Belinsky, however, makes a temporal distinction, assigning the term povest’ to a form that started “very recently, in the 20s of the present century. To that time it had been a foreign growth [chuzhezemnoe rastenie]” (I: 150). “Marlinskii was our first short story writer” (I: 151).
epizod iz bespredel'noy poemy sudeb chelovecheskikh. [...] povest' -- raspadennyi na chast', na tysyachi chastey, roman; glava, vyryannaya iz romana». Revealing his civicly directed perspective, Belinsky sees in both forms the ability to expose human life [chelovecheskaia zhiz''], moral rules [pravila nравственности], and philosophical systems [filosoficheskie sistemy], but, in essence, all that distinguishes the short story from the novel is its size. Any stricter formal conditions would limit the freedom that defined these prose forms.

Writing at the same time that Belinsky wrote his later essays, Gogol, too, points to short fiction's [povest'] social perspective -- in the sense that the events portrayed should be plausible -- and that the work should be provocative, but not necessarily moralizing. Such an understanding immediately announces that the work should have some meaning for the reader.

Повесть избирает своим предметом случаи, действительно бывшие или могущие случиться со всяким человеком, -- случай почему-нибудь замечательный в отношении психологическом, иногда даже вовсе без желания сказать нравоучение, но только остановить внимание мыслящего или наблюдателя. [...] Иногда само происшествие не стоит внимания и берется только для того, чтобы выставить какую-нибудь отдельную картину, живую, характеристическую черту условного времени, места и нравов, а иногда и собственной фантазии поэта.

35 Ibid., I: 150 -- Belinsky's italics designate the other reviewer's words. See Iurii Mann's notes to Belinsky, SS, I: 651n7, 633n41. Apparently the reviewer was N.I. Nadezhdin (1804-1856), the founder of the monthly Teleskop (1831-1836), who was reviewing V. Ushakov's short story "Kirgiz-kaisak" [Киргиз-кайсак]. Mann notes that the review appeared in Teleskop, 1831, Part I, No. 3, 383.

36 Ibid., I: 140.

37 See the entry "Short Story" [Повесть] in Gogol's outline for his projected «Учебная книга словесности для русского юношества», in N.V. Gogol, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 14 Vols. (Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1937-1952), 8: 482. The «Учебная книга» was not published in Gogol's lifetime and finally appeared in print in 1896 (8: 805). It has been proposed that Gogol wrote the work between 1844 and 1846 (8: 804).
Gogol gives licence to the artist to portray that perspective and imply that plausibility as he chooses to depict them -- in a poetic manner or animated telling [zhivoi rasskaz], for instance -- but says nothing concrete about the work's scope or size, except for what he might be implying when he writes that the work portrays an occurrence [proisshestvie] or event(s). Twenty years later Tolstoy was more specific.

Tolstoy understands the distinction between short story [povest'] -- or of short fiction generally -- and the novel [roman] as one of effectiveness. In his drafts for an "Introduction" to War and Peace, he voices his sense that the novel (as it was understood in Europe) proposes "a plot that has growing complexity, intrigue, and a happy or unhappy denouement"; whereas, the short story focuses on a single event, "with the aim of proving or clarifying some kind of idea or series of ideas." Tolstoy's guidelines reflect his understanding that prose forms are distinguished by the extent to which they portray how an event can effect. The "usual scope" of Tolstoy's short fictional writings (that appeared before War and Peace), explains Kathryn Feuer, was "a single experience of one protagonist in a particular situation." Feuer adds: "The themes treated in these smaller pieces -- vanity, courage, love, beauty, death -- are often

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39Caryl Emerson has pointed out that for Tolstoy "different genres, fictional and nonfictional, contain hidden assumptions about the nature of historical causality." See her Boris Godunov. Transpositions of a Russian Theme (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 3 -- her italics.

great ones and the experience conveyed is usually intricate and subtle, but its scope has been sharply restricted." Accepting Feuer's observations, it can be concluded that for Tolstoy, in short fiction the focus is how an event affects a particular character or how a particular idea is embodied by one or a few characters. A novel, to Tolstoy's mind, could not help but acknowledge the rippling effect of an event, the event's inevitable ability to touch many characters or to initiate a series of happenings that might cover various stages in the life of a single character.\textsuperscript{42}

In the above-mentioned letter of 1 June 1877, Leskov, similarly to Tolstoy, implies that shorter fictional works (the tale, sketch and short story \textit{povest'}, \textit{ocher\v{k}}, \textit{rasskaz}, respectively) are distinct from the novel according to their scope. The writer of shorter works «может быть только рисовальщиком, с известным запасом вкуса, умения и знаний; а, затевая ткань романа, он должен быть еще и мыслитель, должен показать живые создания своей фантазии в отношении их к данному времени, среде и состоянию науки, искусства и весьма часто политики».\textsuperscript{43} The distinction of draughtsman to thinker proposes that the first type of creator \textit{shows} while the second one also \textit{elucidates}. The creator of shorter works can get away with depicting an occurrence or character trait («и в повести, и даже в рассказе должна быть своя служебная роль -- например показать в порочном сердце тот уголок, где еще уцелело что-нибудь святое и чистое»\textsuperscript{44}) while the novelist should consider the

\textsuperscript{41}\textit{Ibid.}, 19.

\textsuperscript{42}"The very choice of genre [for Tolstoy] was a choice among various notions of plausibility, and each predetermined the value of actions occurring within its borders," (Emerson, \textit{Boris Godunov}, 3).

\textsuperscript{43}Leskov, \textit{Sobranie sochinenii v odinnadtsati tomakh}, 10: 450. Emphasis in the original.

\textsuperscript{44}\textit{Ibid.}, 451.
goings-on of contemporary society.

Thus this small survey shows that nineteenth-century Russian commentators provided descriptions of the short story that share much with those given by Poe and later students of short fiction: Belinsky refers to a reduced size; Gogol writes of provocative (for both the reader and character) and significant occurrences; Tolstoy is after the meaning of a single event or experience; and, Leskov, too, values an artistic depiction of an experience or character trait. It should be noted, too, that from the 1830s to the 1880s Russian short fiction took on such forms as the physiological sketch, the stsenka, and skaz, forms masterfully employed by the writers mentioned above and that will be discussed in relation to the work of Chekhov and Korolenko, particularly.

Still other efforts to generalise the themes and topics of the short story propose a more modern or twentieth-century conception of short fiction, hints at which appear in some of Garshin's stories. Such descriptions emphasise how the world appears to a particular character at a given moment. One might anticipate learning not the truth of that character's life, but of the character's interpretation of life at that moment, of that moment's presentation, and of its effect on the character. Short story scholar Charles E. May explains (albeit a bit too freely with regard to Chekhov, perhaps) that "'an experience' phenomenologically encountered, rather than 'experience' discursively understood, is the primary focus of the modern short story." Of short story writers, Nadine Gordimer has offered that "theirs is the art of the only thing one can be sure of

"A discrete moment of truth is aimed at," she adds, "not the moment of truth, because the short story doesn't deal in cumulatives." Her point is that the short story reflects a certain manner of viewing life. Similarly, an observation such as Wendell Harris's that a thrust of the short story "is to isolate, to portray the individual person, or moment, or scene in isolation -- detached from the great continuum -- at once social and historical," seems a reasonable summary of the mix in the short story of "what is said" with "how it is said," but a summary that suggests more accurately the aim of the modern short story than the conventional nineteenth-century short story.

In any case, if such shared characteristics are applied to create a tight, but detached, portrayal where the overriding theme is isolation, the presentation of "isolation criteria" would be emphasised. These traits need to accommodate the action of, or a reference to, isolating and the consequent interaction between the isolated one and his setting. Plot, characterisation, and setting do not have to be elaborate, and isolation activities do not demand extensive development. The presentation of "isolation criteria," then, is the impetus for the story's message and style. If isolation is the chief theme in the story, the incidents which define it are the focus in the story; the point of the story is to depict particular aspects of that isolation. A fine isolation short story, Poe might have observed, would not waste a word or image on any description that does not help to create or sustain this effect.

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47 Ibid., 180 -- emphasis in the original.

If I am looking at stories in which some force sets apart characters, cuts them off from taking part in life in a usual manner or from projecting a usual sense of being, then I am examining detached views of an incident or experience that, when particularised, define a context that can be best described as *isolation*.

One last, but necessary, component deserves mention. At its most rudimentary level my analysis demands that in order to display isolation each story must refer to a separating or locking in that isolates the individual from the whole. I've suggested that this can be active or passive. Regardless, the story must relate a change of state from attachment to isolation: the story must depict the isolating *or* acknowledge that isolating occurred prior to story time. The story must establish a customary or common state of affairs, what I have been referring to, and will continue to call, the *usual* state of the character. To be consistent I will discuss the events that lead to the isolation in accordance with the meanings assigned by Seymour Chatman to the words *actions* and *happenings*. “In the narrative sense,” Chatman explains,

> [e]vents are either *actions* *(acts)* or *happenings*. Both are changes of state. An action is a change of state brought about by an agent or one that affects a patient. If the action is plot-significant [which it will be for my study], the agent or patient is called a character. Thus the character is narrative -- though not necessarily grammatical -- subject of the narrative predicate. [...] In the linguistic manifestation, at the level of actual English sentence, for example, the character need not be grammatical subject: “The diamonds were stolen by the thief” or “The police were informed that the diamonds had been stolen.” In the latter case the character does not even appear in the manifestation; his presence must be inferred. [...] A happening entails a predication of which the character or other focused existent is narrative object: for example, *The storm cast Peter adrift.* [...] he [Peter] is narrative object, the affected not the effector.⁴⁹

The separating or locking in, then, will be the action or happening that marks the work

⁴⁹Chatman 44-45.
as an "isolation story" and will be a mandatory element of each story, whether it leads to a temporary or permanent condition.

A brief summary of nineteenth-century Russian short stories that display isolation as a central theme or that employ isolation as a means of presentation will help to elaborate these consistencies and will show that the Russian form was a fertile medium for presenting characters in isolation. The following chapter comprises such a summary.
Two: Russian Short Fiction and Isolation, 1835-1880.
An Overview

In the late 1870s and 1880s writings by Garshin, Chekhov and Korolenko became part of the constantly developing literary legacy of Russian short fiction. From the mid-1830s to that time, short fiction written by Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Leskov and Dostoevsky, to name the most celebrated practitioners, did much to establish the world-class stature of the legacy. During this period a major development of Russian literature -- one that was honed by these efforts -- emerged from how its authors characterised the particularly Russian hero. Characterisation became more immediately plausible as authors focused less on grand themes and settings, and more on everyday Russian conditions and possibilities. The ways authors portrayed the demands daily life made on a character expressed one aspect of these works' realism. To present this interaction in a credible and contemporary social setting was to provide both a view of how the Russian hero responded to events in society and a sense of how the hero lived with himself. Historically speaking, the ways in which these authors portrayed (or did not portray) isolation comprised the nearest -- and, perhaps, the most significant -- Russian precursors and influences to the isolation stories of Garshin, Chekhov and Korolenko.

In different ways and for different reasons, Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Leskov and Dostoevsky provided particular views of society in which characters were, or thought they were, isolated from it. Alternatively, for some of the authors isolation did not fit neatly into the agenda they set for their stories. Several stories written by authors of the earlier generation portray the worlds of outsiders, the interaction
between lone characters and society, and the manners of social misfits, topics often
associated with isolation. In those stories appear examples of physical, psychological,
and drug-induced isolation, and events in which characters are overtaken by elements of
their psychological make-up, while others are subjected to social prejudice or harshness
and indifference. Here, in addition, heroes express their preference for a solitary life,
some finding isolation to be the only condition that allows them to express themselves
freely, and others believing that isolation offers the only sure conditions for self-
preservation, be it spiritual, physical, or emotional. This chapter reviews such works.
It will identify these and other thematic and formal aspects of isolation in the earlier
short fiction and will establish partial criteria from which to measure what Garshin,
Chekhov and Korolenko had to offer.

Prologue

It would be hasty to start my discussion with Gogol without even briefly acknowledging
a few features that might be assigned to isolation works that appeared before his.
While The Bible, The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, and The Sorrows of
Young Werther hold firm positions in most renderings of the Western literary canon,
monuments of Old Slavic and Russian literature also have considered isolation with
detail and intensity. Prior to the 1840s, Old Slavic and Russian literature depicted
isolation as an admirable condition and also one that emphasized the unforgiving
hardships and feelings that appear in usual life. Clear images of isolation from Old
Slavic hagiographic literature, ranging from that of the ascetic Saint Theodosius ("The
Life of Saint Theodosius" 11th century), holed up alone in a cave, fasting and praying,
to that of the persecuted Old Believer and zealot Avvakum (The Archpriest Avvakum:
The Life Written by Himself [Житие протопопа Аввакума им самим написанное 1669-1676], exiled to Siberia and the far north for not recanting his ways and accepting new church reforms, express the physical conditions these individuals endure and the extreme devotion and commitment to their beliefs that guide them and separate them from others. In the seventeenth century, society tales diverged somewhat from literature's usual religious direction, offering glimpses of private life and characters who give themselves freely to their personal curiosities and desires. "The Tale of Savva Grudtsyn" portrays an opposite type to the religious ascetic seeking a place for contemplation. Rather, the title character is sent off from the security of his family home to do business for his father in a foreign society where he is left to his own means and where he exposes his sensibilities to this new world. A seemingly innocuous daily activity changes his life, testing his strengths, weaknesses, and the influence of his early family life, as well as depicting, satirically, aspects of contemporary society.

The Sorrows of Young Werther received echoes in Russia in such short prose works as Karamzin's sentimental tale "Poor Liza" [Бедная Лиза 1792], and, like Goethe's work, it focused on the power that emotions can have on an individual. In the story's first lines the theme of loneliness is raised:

Perhaps no one who lives in Moscow knows the environs of the city as well as I, because no one spends as much time in the fields as I, no one wanders about on foot more than I — without plan, without goal — wherever my nose leads me through meadows and groves, across hill and dale.¹

Shortly after, the first-person narrator presents a concrete image of earthly suffering, a suffering whose cause is the obliteration of life's happiness by some force, and thus that

leads to a condition resembling isolation:

Occasionally I enter the cells and imagine the men who lived in them — and pictures! Here I see a gray elder on his knees before a crucifix and praying for the quick removal of his earthly chains, because all pleasures in life have disappeared for him, all of his feelings have died except the feeling of sickness and weakness (54).

Among Karamzin's innovations in Russian prose appear, for instance, his development of a simplified prose style that did away with archaisms, high style, and extended sentences, and, in addition, his efforts to deliver sentimentalized writings to the Russian reader. Karamzin used stylistic innovations to promote the power of feelings that overcome Liza and that evoke the narrator's images of loneliness and suffering. Like what happens in Goethe's story, feelings in Karamzin's heroine and narrator overcome them so that the usual world appears different, unappealing, even somewhat inaccessible.

Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, Pushkin, and Lermontov, contemporaries of Gogol, also considered isolation from various perspectives. Instead of sentimental urges, efforts to assert themselves often steer the actions of their central characters. These efforts draw the heroes to exotic places, adventures, and unreasonable actions -- to physical isolation, spiritual uncertainty, and emotional abandon -- and give Russian voice to such romantic themes as escapism, protest, madness, murder and isolation, and Russian colouring to the romantic knight-errant and disaffected or spoiled protagonist. Bestuzhev-Marlinskii's heroes who are overcome by strong impulses tend to block off the rest of the world to obtain the goal that this impulse announces. The hero of "Wenden Castle"

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One of Bestuzhev-Marlinskii’s Livonian tales, is overpowered by the desire for vengeance, and the hero of “The Traitor” [Изменник 1825], Sittskii, is driven by envy to abandon his country. Similarly, Pushkin’s hero of “The Queen of Spades” [Пиковая дама 1834], Germann, is obsessed by a chance for great wealth. In his effort to learn the secret at cards that will lead to this wealth, he frightens to death the keeper of the secret. Thus his initial mania is overtaken by feelings of culpability. Both factors distance him from his typically resolute and aloof self and prompt him to new actions. Pechorin, Lermontov’s aimless, if maverick, hero of his novel A Hero of Our Time [Герой нашего времени 1838-1840], finds himself on an unexpected adventure in the town of Taman, «самый скверный городишко из всех приморских городов России». As if compelled to encounter strange circumstances, Pechorin can find no lodgings except for a hut [luchuzhka] that is somewhat “suspicious” [nechisto], explains a sentry posted to the town. Alone except for his orderly, Pechorin disrupts the activities of smugglers [kontrabandisty] and almost meets his death by drowning. His actions express his unbridled curiosity, yet overriding indifference for the well-being of others, traits that attract him to strange adventures and that separate him from others.

From Nestor’s “Life of Theodosius” to A Hero of Our Time, then, appear literary

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3 М. Иу. Лермонтов, Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh (Москва: Khudozhestvennai literatura, 1984), 4: 52. The editors to this edition suggest that Lermontov started writing the novel in the second half of 1838 (4: 468). “Taman” appeared separately in the journal Notes of the Fatherland [Отечественные записки] in February 1840 (as had the sections “Bela (From the Notes of an Officer on the Caucasus)” [Бела (Из записок офицера о Кавказе)] and “The Fatalist” [Фаталист] in March and November issues for 1839) (4: 468).

4 Recall Pechorin’s assertion that closes the story: “Да и какое дело мне до радостей и бедствий человеческих, мне, странствующему офицеру, да еще с подорожной по казенной надобности!” (Lermontov 4: 62).
individuals separate or separated from a definable whole and contained in a limiting surrounding. Some choose their isolation, others are locked away, and still others are drawn to isolation by inexpressible feelings. To Karamzin's time, isolation is supposed to impress on the reader. The reader is to sense the effect isolation has on Theodosius, both the hardship that is its price and the freedom and harmony that are its rewards, as well as the double-edged nature of Avvakum's isolation: the immutable conviction that supports him and the manifest actions that led others to isolate him repeatedly. Savva Grudtsyn's floundering outside the security of home draws attention to a certain (albeit common) baseness at the foundation of his contemporary society and the freedom that being on his own provides.

When Karamzin's heroine, Liza, believes that she can never again experience the feelings of love she felt for Erast, the world appears meaningless and she cannot continue living. Like Werther, she sees no future because she sees no escape that will allow her to endure the present. Unlike Liza's responses, the rebelliousness and excess that mark heroes' actions in the works of Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, Pushkin and Lermontov draw these heroes into unusual company and challenges, and push them out of what seems their typical routine. Isolation results from their impatience and restlessness and defines their ideals and strengths as well as their ennui and weaknesses. Isolation is not their result, but their existence.

*Gogol*

Early in the final third of Gogol's "Notes of a Madman" [Записки сумасшедшего 1835] Poprishchin, the story's central character, confesses to his notebook that the past appears to him as a deception: "Я не понимаю, как я мог думать и воображать себе,
On this day Poprishchin claims to have learned that he is the King of Spain. Moreover, his diary entries indicate that he is living according to a self-determined calendar and a personal method of recording time. (A later entry is headed: «Никоторого числа. День был без числа» (I: 667)). To his reasoning, he is separated from his past world. In fact, he is isolated in the present, too, in one of the few ways that a character can be isolated in Gogol’s “Petersburg tales.” He is isolated because he perceives his usual world anew.

Poprishchin is a minor civil servant with very little means who is consumed by his consciousness of rank and who is overcome by his desire to gain the attention, if not affection, of his director’s daughter. His diary notes are the first-person narrative that forms the story. They are a record of his daily activities as well as his concern with rank and the untouchable daughter — “untouchable” precisely because of the status supported by such rank. The notes’ style is a gauge of how these fixations reflect Poprishchin’s madness. Gradually, madness undermines his ability to think and act with reasoned awareness. At the same time, it stops him from worrying about his unrealised ambitions.

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3Gogol, Sochineniia, I: 664. Subsequent references to Gogol’s writings will be to this edition and will be indicated by volume and page number in the text.

6By “Petersburg tales” I have in mind the stories “The Portrait” [Портрет 1835, 1842], “Nevskii Prospekt,” “Notes of a Madman,” “The Nose” [Нос 1836] and “The Overcoat” [Шинель 1842]. Vladimir Markovich points out that although the five stories were never published as a cycle, “the concept ‘cycle’ has long been applied to them by readers and criticism.” See his Peterburgskie povesti N.V. Gogolia (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989), 5. He notes that although they are «разновременных и как будто бы вполне самостоятельных произведений связывает действительно очень многое -- и сквозные темы, и ассоциативные переклички, и общность возникающих в них проблем, а родство стилистических принципов, и единство сложного, но при всем том, несомненно, целостного авторского взгляда» (6).

7In his Gogol (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969) Victor Erlich notes this depiction to be “one of the first pathological sketches in Russian literature” (90).
His particular isolation, then, is not defined by the distance between him and higher ranks or the unbridgeable chasm between him and the director’s daughter; instead, his expanding madness -- perhaps caused by, and often indistinguishable from, his obsessiveness -- isolates him from what he usually does of a day. (The onset of madness, it appears, predates the story. In his first diary entry Poprishchin admits: «Признаюсь, с недавнего времени я начинаю иногда слышать и видеть такие вещи, которых никто еще не видывал и не слыхивал» (I: 653)). Only when he is completely mad can he overcome the rank system by “becoming” King Ferdinand VIII of Spain and, thus, can he stop feeling so intensely for the young woman. Yet, at this time he is irrecoverably distant from the routine outlined in the diary notes’ earliest entries.

Toward the beginning of the story Poprishchin declares a sense of belonging. He situates himself in his work group. No fewer than five times -- although occasionally with a tone of derision -- he writes of “our brotherhood of civil servants” [nasha brat’ia chinovnikov], “our chief” [nash nachal’nik], “our director” [nash direktor], intimating his inclusion and membership in a larger whole. This inclusion is not naturally accompanied by a brotherly feeling in a clearly moral sense, but suggests a “brotherhood” because he and his co-workers share a common space and time. The brotherhood consists of no relative ideals, just the existence as described. Poprishchin has a role in that community -- sharpening quills for the director -- and shares space with others. This association with the whole is not always recognised, as when his immediate superior, his chief, first verbally reminds Poprishchin that his presence provides little meaning for that world: «Ну, посмотри на себя, подумай только, что ты? ведь ты нуль, более ничего» (I: 655), and on another day physically ignores him: «Начальник отделения показал такой вид, как будто бы он не заметил моего
Both the focus and form of the notes, as well as the events they record, comment on the evolving madness and on Poprishchin's being distanced from usual goings-on. They reflect his mentality and attachment to the real world as it exists around him. The unreasonable content of the notes evolves from a description of the improbable envy that his chief must feel for Poprishchin, to records of the correspondence of talking dogs, and finally to the conviction that he is the King of Spain. His sense of necessary activity evolves, too. In the earliest stage he still performs his role at work. Later, his belief that dogs exchange letters -- letters, incidentally, composed of a language more rational than that in his own notes -- leads him, apparently, to have to undertake new actions, to seek out the dogs. Ultimately, through the eyes of the King of Spain, Poprishchin's world appears to hold no semblance of the one he recorded initially. Madness isolates aspects of his usual self so that he does not seem to be the being that was first presented.

In Gogol's "Petersburg tales" the understanding of what comprises a "usual self" is particular, yet contingent to where that self is located -- namely, in Petersburg. Speaking specifically on "The Overcoat," but advancing an observation that applies equally to Gogol's other "Petersburg tales," Vladimir Nabokov depicts the setting of

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3My interpretation that Poprishchin is affected by his mental state places my reading in opposition to Victor Erlich's, that "[t]he humiliated petty clerk who craves esteem uses his schizophrenia to escape the unbearable truth" (Erlich 94. My italics.). I'm not convinced of Poprishchin's active ability to utilise his mental state knowingly. Rather, Poprishchin is the direct object of the action. I prefer Dostoevsky's view that Poprishchin, like the hero in Dostoevsky's plan for a satirical (denunciatory) story [plan oblichitel'noi povesti], was "seized by a kind of illusion." Dostoevsky. Diary, Volume Two, May-June 1877: 982. In the Russian Poprishchin is the direct object: "Его обуял своего рода мираж, как и Поприщин." F.M. Dostoevskii, Dnevnik pisatel'ja za 1877 god (Parizh: YMCA-Press, n.d.), 183.
Gogol's story as a world of flawed lives. "Something is very wrong," declares Nabokov, "and all men are mild lunatics engaged in pursuits that seem to them very important while an absurdly logical force keeps them at their futile jobs -- this is the real "message" of the story." The absurdly logical force might be said to provide the structure of Gogol's fictional setting -- the necessary conditions of existence -- while individual lives are eked out from under it.

Nabokov's sense of absurdly logical force embraces all that distinguishes the setting and that directly affects the daily routines of the characters in "The Overcoat." That setting for all the stories of the cycle is Petersburg, the capital. More than just a back-drop, Petersburg affects how its citizens live. This statement may seem a truism: certainly a city, understood collectively as physical construct and people, as we similarly understand the meanings of "church" and "university," influences dynamically how its inhabitant lives. But Gogol's Petersburg is a bit more extreme. In his "Introduction" to a recently published edition of Gogol's stories, Iurii Mann sought to capture the additional energy of Petersburg when he underscored the combined senses of submission and independence that simultaneously condition the existence of a city dweller.

Город -- это водоворот и вихрь, мешающий все со всем. И в то же время город сохраняет и усиливает социальные, сосновые, профессиональные, цеховые и иные перегородки. Нигде человек не чувствует себя одновременно столь связанным с другими и столь отъединенным, как в городе. Город -- знак и коммуникабельности, и отчужденности вместе. Вот именно это противоречие схвачено описанием Невского проспекта, открывающим одноименную повесть

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10On the living nature of place in Gogol's writings, see Maguire 30-34. Maguire elaborates on his understanding that in Gogol's work there is a "larger context of an underlying metaphor that informs all Gogol's ideas about place: that of a living organism" (30).
Mann's description is intriguing because he bestows control on the city. A man receives what the city allows, Mann implies, but the city's "power" does not eliminate the individual's presence. The man is still able to feel [chuuvstvovat'].

In the worlds Gogol created characters are part of a collective in which their particular existence is specified by their foremost features, their idiosyncrasies, or their distinctive physical traits. "Human beings," Donald Fanger writes of the "Petersburg tales," "are not so much characterized as usurped by their possessions and attributes." Thus Poprishchin is obsession and madness. In this relationship of space and individuals, such beings and their thoughts, words, attributes and actions colour the collective space, while this space affects the expression and choices of each individual. The activities of individuals give tone to their setting and the setting conditions the individual so as to blur the distinction between person and place. Fanger describes this texture when he explains

The city, then, is the hero, or antihero, of Gogol's cycle, and the city is less a

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12It was precisely with this selectiveness that Vasilii Rozanov took exception in his important essay "How the Character Akaky Akakiyevich Originated." The essay appears in translation in Essays in Russian Literature. The Conservative View: Leontiev, Rozanov, Shestov, 369-383. Spencer E. Roberts, ed. and trans. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1968). "Isn't it clear," Rozanov claims, "that we find here not a construction of man, but his mutilation, as against the way he is in reality?" (375-376. Italics appear in the original.). And further: "both these [Annunziata in "Rome" [Пыт 1842] and Akakii Akakievich] and the "radiant" characters are without life, without natural light on themselves, without movement, without the capability of prolonged thought or of developing feeling" (378-379).

geographical, political, or aesthetic unity than an atmosphere. [...] The atmosphere is defined by means of incidents, which are extreme often to the point of improbability, and in terms of social groupings (these, and their synecdochic badges, are everywhere stressed). 14

Characters and groups of characters are simultaneously distinct and alienated. One might say that characters exist in niches within the "individual incident-social grouping" collective that Fanger notes, forming parts of the many strata and intersecting planes of this city texture. Imbued with the atmosphere of Petersburg, no niche is wholly a character's own. Alternatively, for many of Gogol's characters the niche is the whole. For example, Dmitri Chizhevsky, in his essay on "The Overcoat," with an eye to how in the story the narrator's language causes the reader to alternate between reading of Akakii Akakievich's "little world" and of the "great world," alludes to this understanding of the whole when he untangles the world thus:

[the "little world" of the poor clerk appears to him as a great world precisely because it is full of objects which he looks at "from below"! Gogol wanted to make precisely this form of existence understandable to us, hence the innumerable "evens" characterizing the hero's internal orientation, his spiritual posture. The little world is the great world: in this contradiction is based the whole tale and all of its action. "The Overcoat" is built on oscillations between contrasting experiences. [...] The essence of the artistic structure of "The Overcoat" lies in these oscillations between evaluations of the "little," "tiny," "insignificant" (for us, for the reader) and the "huge," "great," "meaningful" (for Akaky Akakievich and for the narrator). 15

With such a blurring of limits, isolation cannot be defined according to spatial (that is, physical) distinctions or relocation, because each character, whether alone in his niche or convinced that his niche is all that exists, is, to some extent, distant from a human

14Ibid., 114.

whole; rather, isolation arises from personal perception of space, from perceiving the same world anew, from believing that the space seems to be not what it is. A character is isolated, then, when he is removed from this "usual" existence. His usual view may be adjusted or he may be caused to try to change it. (As was seen with Poprishchin, this is not a negative outcome.) This occurrence results from his interaction with society and, while additionally defining him, further colours the Petersburg texture.

In "Notes of Madman" Poprishchin's madness progressively distances him from society and eventually locks him away from usual goings-on around him. Madness loosens his grip on actual, physical reality. His locking away is confirmed by how his notes relate his new awareness. Like Werther and King George, Poprishchin is caused to seem his usual self no longer. He is an unknowing hostage to his madness, but a hostage who enjoys his new perception of the world.

The pleasure Poprishchin feels from this adjusted perception comments directly on the relative quality of his previous usual life in Petersburg, at least of that life as he lives it and as it appears to him. In "Nevskii Prospekt" Gogol offers a variation on the idea that to escape Petersburg reality a character must perceive that world anew. The point in "Nevskii Prospekt," though, is that a character with his wits about him cannot change reality so that it matches what he wants to perceive.

As with Poprishchin, an uncontrollable force guides the actions of the hero of "Nevskii Prospekt," the artist Piskarev, a character who, eventually, would like to be a knowing hostage to his dream state. On a walk along Nevskii Prospekt Piskarev is overcome by the possibility that he has found ideal beauty. He sees a woman who is of physical beauty such that he has never seen before. She is never only a woman; she is a woman and what, to his mind, she potentially might be. Piskarev recognises physical
beauty and anticipates internal beauty. As he follows her, he does not wonder about what he cannot see, about her inner self. To Piskarev, the narrator explains, she is a Bianca of Perugino [Perudzhinova Bianka], an apparently distinguished woman [znatnaia dama], a many-coloured cloak [pistryi plashch] (I: 499). She is his subject [Stainym trepetom speshil on za svoim predmetom], an unfamiliar being [neznakomoe sushchestvo], a collection of features (I: 501). The attraction he feels intensifies when she, in turn, looks at him. Her look has the power to fascinate. The narrator recounts: «Она взглянула на Пискарева, и при этом взгляде затрепетало его сердце; она взглянула сурово, чувство негодования пропустило у ней на лице при виде такого нагого преследования: но на этом прекрасном лице и самый гнев был обворожителен» (I: 501. My italics)). And the world as it appears to him transforms:

When he catches up to her and she presents herself to him through her words and actions, his sense of beauty is tainted. She stops being his ideal when she commits herself to real life.¹⁴ She lacks the spiritual beauty that Piskarev seeks and anticipates from her physical beauty. She is not concerned with his specific desire, but is concerned with her immediate satisfaction.

Her self-concern is different from, but not totally distant from what motivates Piskarev’s action. Piskarev does not approach her for sympathetic reasons. He is not

¹⁴The second time he meets with her, the narrator announces on Piskarev’s behalf, that «лучше бы ты была нема и лишена вовсе языка» (I: 514).
approaching to save her from her "fallen life." Rather, he wants a life with beauty. His actions, too, are motivated chiefly by self-concern.\(^\text{17}\) He wants a world that resembles his design. This self-concern is a defining feature of Petersburg. Both characters are alienated and indifferent, and do not fully understand or have sympathy for each other. They do not partake in society, they function in it. When, eventually, he proposes marriage to her, she thinks of it in terms of functions and tasks -- as a laundress or seamstress -- of a humdrum existence. These are Nabokov's flawed lives from the groupings that Fanger mentions. These characters are parts of the whole that cannot link up, cannot communicate. He cannot convey his thoughts to her. She hears them as empty words and cannot understand the essence of what he wants. Communication does not make this society cohere; rather, the Petersburg atmosphere holds it together. In fact, in the "Petersburg tales" characters rarely communicate or, like Akakii Akakievich of "The Overcoat," they communicate poorly and in partial sentences.

Piskarev's concern overpowers him, but he can only capture his ideal image, his adjusted world, in his dreams. When he can no longer achieve this he takes opium to inspire such dreams. He spends his days waiting for the evenings so he can sleep and dream, because, in comparison to his dream-life with the image of her, reality is repulsive [otratitel'na deistvitel'nost'] (I: 510). When he tries to make his dream a reality by offering her marriage, she belittles his suggestion, causing him to run from her and wander aimlessly. Finally he returns to his room, locks himself away and takes

\(^\text{17}\)Of course Piskarev's friend, Pirogov, more closely resembles the prostitute on account of his carefree indifference to the expectations of others. Pirogov's actions are not based on ideals, but on immediate satisfaction.
his life. Summing up his death, the narrator concludes:  " Так погиб, жертва безумной страсти, бедный Пискарев" (I: 515). Almost forty-five years later Garshin would publish "An Incident" [Происшествие 1878], a story of a young man’s attraction to a prostitute. In that story, too, its hero is infatuated with a woman and with how he can affect her. When he cannot realise his ambition, he gives himself up to drink and then, like Piskarev, takes his life. Garshin’s story has a clear social component.

The word victim [zhertva] implies that Piskarev was subject to some force. The narrator is quite right, but limits his explanation, placing the onus of the outcome on the passion -- a senseless one, moreover -- rather than on society. We might conclude that Piskarev is a victim of the clash between reality and his wish to replace the real world with one that includes his ideal. Whereas the narrator, by using the modifier “senseless” [bezumnaia] suggests the effort was misguided from the start. The overwhelming desire to realise his ideal, even in dreams, and his being taken by the dream cut him off from usual life. He waits to revive this ideal in dreams, giving the rest of life minimal attention. For all Piskarev’s apparent passion, the narrator describes these intervals simply:  "Все откинувши, все позабывши, сидел он с сокрушенным, с безнадежным видом, полный только одного сновидения" (I: 510).  "Если бы его кто-нибудь видел сидящим безмолвно перед пустым столом или шедшим по улице, то, верно бы, принял его за лунатика или разрушенного крепкими напитками" (I: 511). Reality, however, does not conform to the changes he wants. Through the powers of opium he can modify or tailor the world to meet his specifications, but the woman, a fact of Petersburg, will not bow to his active confrontation. Recall that, unlike Piskarev, Poprishchin has no say in whether his perception of the world changes. The change is not in his control, nor does it involve
direct confrontation with a Petersburg fact. Piskarev's conscious effort and failure to change his world juxtapose the force that overcomes Poprishchin and that stops him from worrying about unrealised ambitions. These different outcomes suggest that Gogol's two characters, as much as they want change, cannot consciously change their perceptions of Petersburg reality. The narrator seems to know that change cannot occur and through the tone of his objective indifference embodies this attitude. Piskarev's passion is "senseless" because it cannot be realised. Its realisation would make usual life rather unusual.

Of Gogol's "Petersburg tales," perhaps "The Overcoat" most famously describes how its hero interacts with Petersburg reality. Unlike Poprishchin and Piskarev, Akakii Akakievich actively tailors his natural, Petersburg isolation so he can exist there. A brief comparison of that story with "Notes of a Madman" and "Nevskii Prospekt" presents Akakii Akakievich as fairly remarkable. He is a man of certain strengths and will. Mostly, he is the narrative subject of the story and brings about actions; whereas, Poprishchin and Piskarev are narrative objects. Akakii Akakievich does things he had not done previously -- he shows his character by demanding to see the district police chief, for instance (I: 628) -- and he receives and is inspired by new feelings -- such as those he feels on the day he receives the overcoat. He expresses his self rather than not seeming to be it.

That self is defined by his extreme habits and the inordinate value he places on material possessions and his work, as well as by his ability to cope in the world. These traits comment as much on Akakii Akakievich himself as on the world of the story.

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18 Recall Chatman's distinctions in Chapter One.
Akakii Akakievich’s passions may be petty on other scales -- according to the laws of other “worlds” or systems -- but in his world they are reasonable. The tiny events that bring Akakii Akakievich pleasure and the parsimonious attention that he pays to his money are details that anticipate and culminate in the feeling he has for his overcoat. A simple reading of his actions suggests that each is necessary to Akakii Akakievich and that each is tied to how he exists in the world, to how he interacts with that place: for a man who walks to work in the Petersburg winter, the overcoat is necessary to keep warm and guard his health; for a man whose skills are few, recognising his greatest talent -- copying -- is necessary to his sense of self (he knows when not to try to extend his talents); for a man who is verging on poverty, counting kopecks is necessary to survive. He must do these things alone in this “irresponsible world.” He endures hardships and enjoys new pleasures in accordance with his own scale, a scale that is unavoidably conditioned by his setting, but that is made to be agreeable through his own efforts. Despite his idiosyncrasies, he acts in society and creates a sense of life -- albeit a chiefly self-sufficient one -- with which he is content and that brings him peace. He receives joy from his work and he structures his life around it. “There,” notes the narrator, “in that copying, a kind of varied and pleasant world appeared to him” («Там, в этом переписыванье, ему виделся какой-то свой разнообразный и приятный мир»). This type of contentment is not evident in Poprishchin or Piskarev. The

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19 Nabokov’s epithet. Nabokov 56, 141.

20 The possibility that “world” can be replaced with “peace” should not be ignored. The Russian mir allows for both. I suggest this because three sentences earlier the narrator refers to the world as svet and two pages later speaks of Akakii Akakievich’s “peaceful life” [mirnaia zhizn’: «Написавшись весть, он ложился спать, улыбаясь заранее при мысли о завтрашнем дне: что-то бог пошлет переписывать завтра? Так протекала мирная жизнь человека, который с четырьмя стами жалованья умел быть довольным своим жребием» (I: 613).
following long passage captures how Akakii Akakievich transforms a new difficulty into a fulfilling exercise. He takes a hardship -- his unexpectedly needing a new coat -- that challenges his usual life and recreates his life from it, bestowing on the overcoat life-giving value.

Надобно сказать правду, что сначала ему было несколько трудно привыкать к таким ограничениям, но потом как-то привыкло и пошло на лад; даже он совершенно привыклся голодать по вечерам; но зато он питался духовно, нося в мыслях своих вечную идею будущей шинели. С этих пор как будто самое существование его сделалось как-то полнее, как будто бы он женился, как будто какой-то другой человек присутствовал с ним, как будто он был не один, а какая-то приятная подруга жизни согласилась с ним проходить вместе жизненную дорогу, -- и подруга эта была не кто другая, как та же шинель на толстой вате, на крепкой подкладке без износу. Он сделался как-то живее, даже тверже характером, как человек, который уже определил и поставил себе цель. С лица и с поступков его исчезло само собою сомнение, нерешительность, -- словом, все колеблющиеся и неопределенные черты (I: 620).

His change in usual existence is a removal and an evolution that is accompanied by new experiences. He does not try to change a fact of the city. Possession of the overcoat brings Akakii Akakievich new-found security and confidence. He adjusts, encounters new conditions, and feels new effects. To this extent, his perception of his usual space changes. But his view of the world never fully removes him from his usual existence, from his sense of where he is. He is in the same city at the same time, but walking along streets he has never ventured down before. For instance, the party that Akakii Akakievich attends at his co-worker’s presents aspects of the world that are new to him, but he does not lose sight of the patterns of his usual life.

Все это: шум, говор, и толпа людей, -- все это было как-то чудно Акакию Акакиеевичу. Он просто не знал, как ему быть, куда деть руки, ноги и всю фигуру свою; наконец подсел он к играющим, смотрел в карты, засматривал тому и другому в лица и чрез несколько времени начал зевать, чувствовать, что скучно, тем более что уж давно наступило то время, в которое он, по обыкновению, ложился спать (I: 625).
New conditions demand new measures and Akakii Akakievich does what he can or what he feels he must do. As previously, his life force is tied up with what most occupies him -- the copying gives way to the overcoat. Because of this extreme concentration of his strength, his death is a reasonable result of the events of his world. The energies and life he expended for the overcoat -- and, thus, into the coat -- are lost when the coat is stolen. He has nothing left with which to support his life. Against the background of characters who wish to isolate themselves from the usual Petersburg society, Akakii Akakievich might be viewed as a character determined to negotiate his way through Petersburg life and, thus, appear positive and tragic. Happiness and worries overtake Akakii Akakievich’s consciousness, but until the end of the story he continues to contend with Petersburg.

The sombre mood of these stories and Gogol’s presentation of the more unpleasant aspects of Petersburg society are features designated to the concept “natural realism,” where “natural” implies the physical existence rather than a spiritual one. From these stories, Gogol’s Petersburg appears as cold, grey and fixed. Each individual is somewhat alienated, even isolated. There are no bright signals of hope or change. His characters cannot alter the greater world, they can simply subsist and savour rare moments of joy that inevitably are nullified. Because the atmosphere of Petersburg is everywhere that one can recognise it, particular forms of isolation have to do with perception. Madness, extreme feelings, a drug-induced state, or self-satisfaction can make one’s inevitable isolation, thus Petersburg, manageable.

The characters of the earlier stories -- “Notes of a Madman” and “Nevskii Prospekt” -- interact with their worlds differently than does Akakii Akakievich. Poprishchin and Piskarev exist best when they are cut off from their immediate,
reasonable awareness of society. Akakii Akakievich is content when he can give himself up to his chief task at hand, a task that, despite its demands, becomes the focus of his daily activities. From the earlier stories, then, to the later one, isolation gives way to efforts for a sound existence. Unsympathetic portrayals that depict delusional escape are replaced with a sympathetic characterisation that describes the poor (materially) man struggling with exacting Russian conditions. Examples of individual weakness in Petersburg change to one of individual strength. That characters want to be in, or enjoy the benefits of, isolation comments both on the harshness of Petersburg and the failings of characters. By the time of Akakii Akakievich, Petersburg is no less harsh, but the character is more able and willing to cope. Isolation is no longer considered only an unconscious option.

Gogol offered fruitful material for later isolation stories. The image of an indifferent Petersburg society that forced its citizens to seek solace in their self-centred daily tasks or refuge in hallucinations played significantly in Dostoevsky's early writing, hinting at the conditions that produced psychologically naive and fragile individuals. The collision that more generally announces the entrance of similarly unversed individuals into a society for which their sensibilities are not prepared, revealing their inhibitions, insecurities, and inabilitys, will resurface in Chekhov's work, too, dumbfounding some heroes and leading others to nervous attacks. Other heroes will receive security, confidence, and a seemingly new place in the world from such everyday occurrences as a kiss -- a new awareness that resembles what Akakii Akakievich received from his overcoat. In his portrayals of a Siberian "little man," Korolenko will also draw on the image of a hardened society that, in its typical coarseness and stinginess, forces a character to tailor his own escape or existence. And,
while madness may not be portrayed as sensitively in Russian literature as it eventually is in Garshin's "The Red Flower" [Красный цветок 1883], Gogol depicted both the exclusion and individual understanding that commonly define the simultaneous existence madness provides, offering a benchmark that Garshin could not help but know.

_Turgenev_

In many of his stories, Turgenev emphasises why individuals are significant and how they endure the trials they face in their lives. In his book on Turgenev, Victor Ripp demonstrates how Turgenev achieved this with both the form and content of many of his stories: "The rationale of the physiological sketch fit the Westernizers' perspective. The sketches seemed to offer an artistic correlative to their emphasis on the individual."

This was important. Ripp sums up, because "society, to Turgenev and the Westernizers, is an aggregate of the individuals moved by particular needs and fulfilling particular functions." 21 Individual, however, should not be understood to mean isolated.

For all their beauty, lasting power and ability to comment both on the development of Russian short fiction in the mid-nineteenth century and on Russian society at that time, the stories of Turgenev's cycle _A Hunter's Notes_ [Записки охотника 1847-1874] rarely present the theme of isolation. The glimpses of isolation in the stories of _A Hunter's Notes_ never overcome the focus of the story. This absence reflects the priorities of the narrator and Turgenev and also has relevance for other stories by Turgenev and for character-types he portrayed, such as the superfluous man.

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The stories are impressions of a single observer, sketches, portraits, and fragments [otryvok] as the narrator admits near the end of "My Neighbour Radilov" [Мой сосед Радилов (1847)], an early story. This is not to say they do not relate actions or happenings. They certainly do. But the actions and happenings tend to emphasise more fully the character or episode that is the narrator’s focus in the story. Such an approach is true to the “sketch” form [ocherk] to which many of these stories belong.

The sketch is a brief prose form with an eye-witness quality. A first-person narrator describes in detail the subject of the sketch, giving the impression that he has directly perceived and experienced what he describes. The sketch is based on external reality and usually portrays a character, place or social problem. It does not show plot or character development. Any development of character or action reflects the narrator’s continued examination of his subject. Because a sketch does not show plot or development, it most likely will not portray the change of a character’s usual self; rather, it keys on a particular aspect of that self. Thus, for a character to be isolated in a sketch, the isolation will have to predate the story’s events. Some examples will help here, but, first, a few words about the narrator of A Hunter’s Notes.

A case might be made for the isolation of the narrator. He, more than any other

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22Turgenev, Sochineniia, IV: 60. Subsequent references to Turgenev’s writing will be to this edition and will be indicated in the text by volume and page number.

participant in the stories, consistently stands apart. He is separate because he never really belongs to that setting in which the story takes place. He is apart from others, usually peasants, on account of his position as landowner, visitor and chronicler. He might be described as aloof, but he is hardly isolated.

As the title A Hunter's Notes implies, the stories of the collection are the record and narrative of one person. The hunter is a representative of the 1840s intelligentsia. He tells of incidents and people he encounters, but maintains objective detachment -- actively removes himself -- even under tragic circumstances. His eye is attentive to scenic as well as social detail, his voice is measured, and he maintains an objective tone. But occasionally his notes disclose his preferences. He is never more than an observer, casual questioner or interlocutor. He does not enter into debate or outwardly challenge the opinions or actions of others. The narrator is more concerned

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24 His separateness is seen, perhaps most famously, in “The Singers” [Певцы 1850] and “Bezhin Meadow” [Бежин луг 1851]. Neither the local pub singers of the first story nor the second story’s peasant boys, huddled around a fire during their evening watch over horses, include the hunter in their activities.

25 This does not mean that it is a uniform work; studies of Turgenev and his work by Richard Freeborn and Victor Ripp show clearly that the cycle is made up of diverse parts and is experimental in form and content. Richard Freeborn, Turgenev: The Novelist’s Novelist. A Study (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 29-32 and Ripp 42-78. But one can say that it is a united work. Its unity derives from its single narrator and constant theme, the peasantry.

26 From a short trip early in “The Bailiff” [Бурмистр 1847] he recalls an accident with seeming indifference: «Впрочем, путешествие совершилось весьма благополучно; только на одном недавно починенном мостике телега с поваром завалилась, и задним колесом ему придавило желудок» (IV: 138).

27 Consider the words he chooses in the following passage from “The Meeting” [Свидание 1850] to describe an obviously insolent man. The hunter wakes to find himself an unexpected spy on the rendezvous of this man and a young peasant girl: «Я с любопытством посмотрел на него из своей засады. Признаюсь, он не произвел на меня приятного впечатления. Это был, по всем признакам, избалованный камердинер молодого, богатого барина. [...] Лицо его, румяное, свежее, нахальное, принадлежало к числу лиц, которые, сколько я мог заметить, почти всегда возмущают мужчин и, к сожалению, очень часто нравятся женщинам» (IV: 263).
to introduce the texture of a scene, noting the context and mood that nature provides and the interaction with that setting that each character creates. He does not try to elaborate on the scene's reason for being. He describes, he does not guess. "In each sketch," Ripp writes of the cycle, "he covers just enough ground to illuminate his subject, no more and no less."^28 He reveals himself by what he records and how he presents it, as well as by his occasional digressions and slips from objective reporting.

This brief analysis of the narrator's detachment, both from those he encounters and from what he presents, defines his usual existence as portrayed by the sketches. Although he can connect with others on account of his social status or his evidently amiable nature, he never belongs. He is always a visitor and does little to endear himself to others. He is never isolated.

Of the individuals he presents in the notes there are some who have chosen to remove themselves from society, to isolate themselves physically from a, or their, usual peasant life. The descriptions of Ermolai [Ермолов и мельничиха 1847], Biriuk [Бириюк 1848], and Kasian [Касьян с Красной Мечи 1851] reveal the characters as separate and alone, as having chosen an isolated existence.^[29 Their lone existences form their usual lives, lives that bring them contentment. Part of Turgenev's achievement in such portrayals is that he reveals these peasants' conditions to be self-determined, to be an expression of their individuality. Ermolai is a roving hunter, Kasian is a wanderer, and Biriuk is a forester. Others, though, find their own being separated to be a condition over which they have no control. But they accept the change to their lives

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^28 Ripp 38.

^29 A note in the text of "Biriuk" explains that "Бириюком называется в Орловской губернии человек одинокий и угрюмый" (IV: 169).
without any fuss. Arina (in story-time, the miller's wife) in "Ermolai and the Miller's Wife" is also alone. She had previously been sent away, cut off for good, from the home in which she used to work. As her one-time landlord [barin] (tellingly named Zverkov) had explained to the narrator: «беспорядок в доме терпеть, однако же, нельзя. Большой член лучше отсечь разом» (IV: 31). The landlord breaks all contact that Arina had with her usual life, not allowing her to recover any part of that life. She accepts her expulsion and finds satisfaction in her changed life. A break takes place for different reasons in "Living Relics" [Живые мощи 1874]. For the most part Lukeria, the protagonist, is alone. Beset by an incurable injury, she was sent from her master's home seven years earlier to be close to her family. But she has not been abandoned or locked away. Her family is near and they care for her. As this story so clearly shows, Lukeria has not been cut off from her usual self. Her essential self is the same; she continues to love others and to be content in the world. She appears to have been horribly fettered by her ailment. She cannot do many of the things she usually did, but as the narrator learns, she still seems to be herself. This mix of her inner beauty and outer humility eclipses her being alone and receives from it further significance.30

In each of these stories the narrator relates the lives of characters who are removed from a community and offers minimal digressions or signs of emotion, a tone that Korolenko's intelligent narrator will employ when he similarly observes peasants in such stories as "Killer" [Убийца 1885], "Escapee from Sokolin [Соколинец 1885], and "Behind the Icon" [За иконой 1887]. He, too, is direct in his descriptions of peasants

who are suffering or who have been treated harshly. Turgenev is not concerned to give psychological development in the characters or to provide more than a glimpse of their lives. Such a straightforward manner is occasionally echoed in the approaches to life that characters assert. Take the following words of Mardarii Apollonych, one of the central characters of “Two Landlords” [Два помещика 1852], and the narrator’s response:

-- По-моему: коли барин -- так барин, а коли мужик -- так мужик... Вот что. На такой ясный и убедительный довод отвечать, разумеется, было нечего (IV: 183).

When they do occur, relocation or abandonment seem a natural outcome of this understanding of relations. In “Ermolai and the Miller’s Wife” and “Living Relics” the rightness of Zverkov’s decision is not questioned and Lukeria’s movement from her master’s home is regarded as sensitive and sensible.

The stories of A Hunter’s Notes are very much of this tone, a tone that such Chekhov stories as “Judgment” [Суд 1883], “Vanka [Ванька 1886], and “Steppe” [Степь 1888] will recall. Manners are not questioned, just presented. True enough, some of the description is subjective and even personal. The narrator does show his affection and respect for nature in some extensive and lyrical passages. As well, he reflects his weaknesses and biases when faced with disagreeable circumstances or people who attract or nauseate him. Generally, though, he maintains the broad guidelines expected of a “sketch” narrator, guidelines that limit the inclusion of details needed to offer isolation as a central theme in the stories. But it is a form that allows him to define each character’s particularly limited contribution to society.

With the story “Mumu” [Муму 1854] Turgenev moved away from the “sketch” form, both thematically and formally. “Mumu” is about the merciless extremes of the
peasant-landlord relationship; it has a moral point to make about human relations in general, rather than the aim of stressing the particular needs and functions that move and fulfil a character.\footnote{Recall Ripp 44.} Formally, the story displays action development, the usual self of the character adjusts to changes, and the eye-witness quality of the narrator is replaced by an omniscient and occasionally sentimental third-person voice. In this story Turgenev includes the process that leads to isolation in order to emphasise a point.

The central character of “Mumu,” Gerasim, is a loner who, at the end of the story, rigidly isolates himself to avoid further anguish. In “Mumu” the central characters are constantly detailed by descriptions of their living alone and their solitary decision-making. The story’s opening paragraphs key on the characters’ detachment from others and juxtapose Gerasim, a deaf mute peasant, with his mistress, anticipating their coming together.\footnote{A clash is all but announced early in the story. The narrator praises him, then announces: “Славный он был мужик, и не будь его несчастье, всякая девка охотно пошла бы за него замуж” (V: 264. My italics). In the sentence that follows this citation, the narrator announces that Gerasim was moved to Moscow.} The description of her existence is brief and terse: she lived on a remote street in Moscow, she was a widow, her children left home, she went out rarely and lived alone. The imagery is sombre: her home was grey with columns shielding it, her old age was miserly and boring, and “in her day” all was unhappy and foul. In the country Gerasim had lived alone, separately from his brothers. He did the work of four men and was admired by the other peasants. Her unhappy existence contrasts his healthy one. Still, she has the upper hand and controls his fate.

Consumed by her own limited existence, the mistress is blind to the lives of others, particularly to the lives of her servants. To satisfy her immediate desires she
(perhaps not knowingly) deprives Gerasim of that which he enjoys and to which he becomes attached. She uproots him from his home in the country to live and work in Moscow. She has a woman he cares for married off to someone else and then sent away because of that man's drunkenness. Lastly, at her order Gerasim is forced to kill his dog, Mumu, the focus of his affection and attention.

At the end of the story, the narrator explains, Gerasim lives in isolation:

He lives in isolation so that he will never again have something dear taken from him, so that he will never again experience such pain. Isolation is a form of protection for Gerasim when he does not have control, apparently, over whether he can keep friends or live as he wishes. In his "self-world relationship" the only way he can protect himself from further suffering is to avoid becoming attached to another.

As in the beginning of the story, at the end Gerasim is alone and working hard. From outer appearances his position does not seem to change from the beginning to the end of the story except that at first his lone existence describes his usual lot, and at the end he is driven to take on such a lifestyle. All that happens in the meantime shows how his landlord's actions over him juxtapose his own. It also shows his obedience and sense of who he is in the hierarchical scheme. Lastly, it shows that he feels, that he is not simply a machine closed off from the world as the initial and final scenes suggest. The ability to feel is stressed as a natural one by Turgenev. Because Gerasim's feelings for the woman and the dog were strong, the loss he feels when they are taken from him is great. And in such a story Turgenev seeks to depict more sympathetically and openly...
extremes of the cause and effect relationship that influences the life of a peasant. Turgenev expands his narrator’s observation to reveal a larger picture of peasant-peasant and peasant-landlord relations. In addition, he juxtaposes thoughtless actions to thoughtful ones and designates sympathetically why and how characters live and act. He moves outside the strict bounds of the sketch form (such as first-hand reporting of events, limited observation) to reveal the causes and fortuitous events that direct Gerasim’s life, causes and events that comment universally on human understanding.

In addition to examples of chosen and imposed physical isolation, Turgenev considered psychological isolation. I suggest that Turgenev’s “Diary of a Superfluous Man” [Дневник лишнего человека 1850], written about the same time as the early stories of A Hunter’s Notes, does not provide an example of physical isolation, but reveals the title character’s personally perceived isolation. In fact the story describes why such an individual is part of society. When the hero Chulkaturin offers that nature, obviously, had not expected his appearance and, consequently, “has treated him as it would an unexpected and uninvited guest” [kak s neozhdannym i nezvanym gostem] (V: 186), he assigns a single order to the world, yet suggests an inherent distance in his relationship with the world, as if he will not fit with, and not be recognised by, any company he encounters. He has to belong in order to be superfluous. It is a distance that intimates immediate strangeness and incompatibility, not isolation. From an objective viewpoint, he is not isolated, he is different and does not fit as he would like. His life is no more remarkable than any other man’s and he has not made an impression on anybody.

33 He aligns himself with the central character of Turgenev’s story “Hamlet of the Shchigrovskii District” [Гамлет Щигровского уезда 1849].
In order to argue for his being isolated, it would be necessary to prove that he belonged differently, that at one time he did not have those features that make him superfluous or that those features had been acceptable. As presented in the “single incident” [odin suchai (V: 239)] that forms the bulk of the story, the superfluous man does not become superfluous. Chulkaturin’s portrayal shows there to be no watershed in his existence that marks a transformation from his previous belonging to his being separated. Certainly this portrayal does not show the results of such a transformation or what may lead to it. As if clarifying this point, Chulkaturin notes: «Я должен сказать о себе, что я хотя, конечно, и лишний человек, но не по собственной охоте» (V: 188). He is a type and is an undeniable player in society. He shares characteristics with others and recognises aspects of protocol and social norms; that is, he is connected to the whole and is a product of society. But in the retrospective evaluation that forms his diary, Chulkaturin expresses a specific bent on society, explained by his unfulfilled expectations to be recognised. His activities in the world are not isolated, but his blinding anxiety over his own existence makes them seem to be that way. It is not that he is excluded, but that he is not included as he would like to be. He is of no importance to Liza, the woman with whom he is obsessed, and he is shown not to be worthy of being killed in a duel that he provoked. After being spared in the duel, he admits a painful observation, that he alone is the cause of his sadness: «Мое самолюбие страдало неизъяснимо. Не совесть меня мучила: сознание моей глупости меня уничтожило. «Я, я сам нанес себе последний, окончательный удар!» (V: 217).}

34 Recall Turgenev’s point made in his lecture “Hamlet and Don Quixote” [Гамлет и Дон-Кихот 1860] that the Hamlet-type harms himself: «Гамлет сам наносит себе раны, сам себя терзает; в его руках тоже меч: обоюдоострый меч анализа» (VIII: 176).
is still part of society and is not caused to act differently than he usually does. His superfluity is an aspect of his usualness. Through the first-person form of his diary, he gives voice to his constant, exclusive concern with his own condition and he covers all else that forms the usualness in the shadow of his superfluity. Like those of the first-person narrator of *A Hunter's Notes*, the superfluous man's particular views colour his recording of what he encounters. These perceptions and their consistency reflect the narrators' usual, if seemingly isolated, existences.

When Michael Andre Bernstein writes that "although both Turgenev's Chulkaturin and Dostoevsky's Underground Man feel themselves cut off from society, from love, and, in the deepest sense, from their own psyches, the "superfluous man" is not concerned with blame or vengeance," he distinguishes Dostoevsky's later character from Turgenev's and points out their common traits. Chulkaturin cannot fit into the world as he would like, but, (as soon will be shown) unlike the Underground Man, he does not hold it away from him and resent it. He confronts a single, usual reality from within it. This integrity -- a usual indication of individuality in Turgenev's heroes -- is a noteworthy trait that often can be seen in those of Turgenev's characters considered here, in both those who isolate themselves and those whom others isolate.

Tolstoy

Tolstoy's writings vigorously explore the individual. They depict characters, open to the variable factors that define a moment, as they confront their immediate context and attempt to organise their lives within it. This confrontation is the unavoidable fact of

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existence that defines their lives. A feeling of harmony with the world is achieved when the character engages this confrontation successfully. This being said, Tolstoy's characters rarely have an easy passage through life because the passage is eventful. Tolstoy's main characters tend to be acutely conscious of themselves and the forces -- the thoughts, events, people, and elements of nature -- they encounter. In fact, the passage through life is doubly demanding because the characters often manage it alone. Or so it seems. Tolstoy appears to be more concerned with isolating a consciousness to see how it responds to that fictional world than with a character's being isolated in the fictional world. He wants his heroes to be open to all they possibly can receive, not closed off. He wants them to interact, but wants that interaction to be particularised. Often, the point of these characterisations is that the characters believe they are remarkably distinct, even quite separate in the world.

As Turgenev had considered the peasantry through sketches and detailed short stories, describing characters and episodes against the backdrop of peasant and landlord

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36 For a reading of the theological implications of such a result see Richard F. Gustafson, Leo Tolstoy, Resident and Stranger: A Study in Fiction and Theology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). Gustafson aligns harmony with peace in Tolstoy's writings and thought: "'Peace' implies the accord of all people, each with each, the harmony of all together at one. This 'peace of all people among themselves' is the 'Kingdom of God on earth' (23,370; 1883). This 'peace,' which in Christian terms is the peace of Christ, is, furthermore, the grand accord of everything that exists, the total unity of All destroyed only by our acts against it. This 'peace,' then, is the beginning and end of all reality; the Divine task of replacing discord with harmony is an act of restoration to 'peace.' The task of life for Tolstoy, therefore, is the 'return of the world to peace' (vozrozhdenie mira k miru) (5, 256; 1856). See page 40. All bracketed and italicised information is Gustafson's.

existences, Tolstoy in his early work employed similar forms and drew on war, a setting with which he was familiar. Tolstoy served in Russian forces on the Danube, in the Caucasus and the Crimea and acquired a mass of personal experiences to complement the second-hand materials he drew on for his writing. He experimented with narrative form and incorporated a variety of themes in his stories and novels. In

Tolstoy's approach in his war stories was but one example of a notable shift in Russian "war literature" of the 1850s.

Eikhenbaum makes clear how Tolstoy, as Turgenev had done in his sketches and stories of the peasantry, was able -- almost obliged by the direction literature was taking at the

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38 Deming Brown proposes that "Sevastopol in December" [Севастополь в декабре месяце 1855] is a sketch and "Sevastopol in May" [Севастополь в мае 1855] and "Sevastopol in August 1855" [Севастополь в августе 1855 года 1855] are short stories [rasskazy]. He argues that the latter two, because they are "related in the third person, employ obvious fictional techniques -- including interior monologue -- which cannot be the properties of an oërk (Brown 39). Brown's observation notwithstanding, all three works exhibit traits common to the sketch form.

39 This comparison is an old one. In his article "Notes on the Journals for September 1855" [Заметки о журналах за сентябрь 1855 года] N.A. Nekrasov compared the two authors, highlighting Tolstoy's story "The Wood-felling" [Рубка леса 1855]. He remarks on the authors' ability to present a true sense of particular character-types. Cited in Tolstoy, SS, 2: 437-438. Subsequent references to Tolstoy's writings will be to this edition and will be indicated by volume and page number in the text. In his Tolstoy: A Critical Introduction (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) R.F. Christian indicates that Nekrasov made similar comments in letters to Turgenev and Tolstoy. See pages 56 and 57.

time -- to provide artistically creative, yet inevitably critical expositions of military life. Differently from Turgenev, who tended to focus on portraying a character’s interaction with society, Tolstoy emphasised the reasoning or lack of reasoning that appeared to underlie such interaction. More than providing records that relay that events happen and that countless individuals form society, Tolstoy explored why events happen and why people live as they do. When he constructed this more critical prose, Tolstoy portrayed characters’ isolated experiences.

In Tolstoy’s series of stories set in the Caucasus and Crimea his narrators gather individual responses to the immediate pressures and potential glories of war to form collages of reactions to military life. The stories unabashedly examine such topics as vanity and bravery and explore the conditions and consequences of campaigns. The narratives relay how men and officers experience the same situations and sensations no matter which war they are fighting; but, each character experiences it individually.

Whether the story is told in a first-, second- or third-person form -- the narrator first provides context by describing in a detached manner the character or episode. He then moves among characters, reporting one character’s consciousness of the moment at a time, isolating each of them while simultaneously depicting the various elements that form the whole. Through his interaction with characters, the narrator addresses the

41These comments most directly relate to “The Raid” [Ha6er 1853], “Sevastopol in December,” “Sevastopol in May,” and “Sevastopol in August 1855.”

42Distinguishing Tolstoy’s ability to generalise in War and Peace, John Bayley explains that the depictions of war in the early stories are different from those in War and Peace because in the early works the war happens “to a particular individual in a particular battle”. See his Tolstoy and the Novel (New York: The Viking Press, 1966), 123. Bayley adds that Tolstoy achieves this ability to generalise, to universalise, only “when he comes to terms with and makes use of the artifice of plot” (123). A lack of plot is also a characteristic of the “sketch” form, the traits of which, Eikhenbaum suggested -- rightly, I believe -- comprise these early stories.
feelings and acts of war and the people who express and cause these feelings. Garshin, too, would address such questions in his war stories. His works, though, tend to depict individual reflection and the challenge that a character’s conscience makes to his intention or action. Physical isolation will force his hero of “Four Days” [Четыре дня 1877] to defend his actions before his conscience and the battle results that surround him.

Tolstoy’s stories do not celebrate war or suggest that places of war should be attractive. In fact, on occasion the stories make a hushed challenge to the romantic perception that such places are an escape, an exciting type of isolation. In “The Wood-felling” [Рубка леса 1855], for example, the Caucasus means different things to the narrator, to the men who already have served there for a number of years, and to the people back in Russia. Through his discussion with the company commander, Bolkhov, the young narrator (he is a cadet according to the subtitle rasskaz iunkera) relates this discrepancy, exposing the apparently bewildering legend [prestrannoe predanie], popular in Russia, that the Caucasus is «какая-то обетованная земля для всякого рода несчастных людей» (2: 70). Bolkhov reveals that, for him at least, fleeing to the Caucasus is not really an escape, but a relocation with worries of its own. What is important here is that the commander hoped to escape feelings, to isolate himself from encroaching emotions. The place is merely the context in which those usual feelings occur. The Caucasus, then, is supposed to be that exotic land where new feelings will be

43 This criticism of the Romantic myth was voiced in passing in the story “The Raid.” Describing a reckless yet brave young officer, the narrator adds that the officer is of the type educated on Marlinskii and Lermontov (the author of A Hero of Our Time [Герой нашего времени 1837-1840], that such people «смотрит на Кавказ не иначе, как сквозь призму героев нашего времени» (2: 15). It is not surprising, then, to learn that Tolstoy was re-reading Lermontov while writing “The Raid” (Christian 51-52).
stirred and old ones closed off. Again, the company commander makes these points:

-- Ведь в России воображают Кавказ как-то величественно, с вечными девственными льдами, бурными потоками, с кинжалами, бурками, черкешенками, -- все это страшное что-то, а, в сутиности, ничего в этом нету веселого. Ежели бы они знали по крайней мере, что в девственных льдах мы никогда не бываем, да и быть-то в них ничего веселого нет, а что Кавказ разделяется на губернии: ... [...] 

-- Все то, от чего я, по преданию, поехал лечиться на Кавказ, все приехало со мною сюда, только с той разницей, что прежде все это было на большой лестнице, а теперь на маленькой, на грязненькой, на каждой ступеньке которой я нахожу миллионы маленьких тревог, гадостей, оскорблений (2: 71).

Thus, looking to isolate himself from past feelings, Bolkhov finds that he cannot escape them. Moreover, he is not alone. On enlisting to fight in the Caucasus he becomes a member of a new community with its own rules of interaction. He is not daringly or singlehandedly taking on this romantic land. On one hand, the feelings are a part of him and undeniable. On the other, he isolates himself from the causes of a particular place by agreeing to be a participant in another. For soldiers in the Caucasus, that fabled haven for disgruntled men cannot promise isolation, cannot promise to close a man off from his feelings. Moreover, in matters of war, the Caucasus is no more an escape than is Sevastopol for the troops and sailors of the Crimean War. The legend of the exotic war-place is a picture without actual power. Tolstoy reduces the grandeur of war by expressing that physical relocation alone will not allow a man to escape elements that affect his inner self and usual life. Feelings continue to affect.

For Tolstoy, feelings also can overcome a character so he does not act reasonably; they isolate aspects of a usual self, as might a sickness or emotions. Uncontrollable feelings can direct a character’s actions, cut him off from usual interaction, and drive him toward ruin. Three examples deserve attention here. An unquenchable thirst for gambling locks away the characters Nekhliudov of “Notes of a Billiard-marker”
[Записки маркера (1855)] and Ilin of “Two Hussars” [Два гусара 1856] from reasonable understanding with their world. Only an exceptional incident jars them from remaining under the power of this passion. Nekhliudov decides that suicide can provide his only escape from the feeling that, through his gambling and self-centred ways, he has killed both his youth and his feelings. All that remains in him is vanity [tshcheslavie], he writes in his suicide note. He senses that he is falling, a most outward sign of which is his uncontrollable urge to gamble at billiards, an urge that is sustained by his vain belief that he soon will win. In “Two Hussars” Ilin is so overcome by his want and need to win that he ignores the entreaties of the elder Turbin to cease playing (and, thus, losing at) cards with the crafty, and, perhaps, cheating Lukhnov. The obsessive hunger to continue to gamble so overpowers Nekhliudov and Ilin that they are unable reasonably to control their actions. When they do consider making a definitive act, they seek to erase from their consciousnesses what they have done. Because they cannot turn back time, they decide to take their lives. Suicide will remove the feelings because it will remove the pressures of a life in which the characters are aware of their actions. In Tolstoy’s early stories feelings that so overpower the characters to make them act unreasonably and to challenge their own integrity are negative feelings.

Generally, when feelings overcome his military characters, Tolstoy is concerned to show how such feelings are caused by war. His stories more often describe characters acting in battle and before their fellows, rather than when away in a billiard room or at a card table. In the everyday activities of military life, Tolstoy’s characters act unreasonably when they aspire to an image of themselves or to express the traits that reflect that image. This, too, can cause them to act in manners outside the usual and to be oblivious to common activities. (Certainly, this will be the case when Garshin’s hero
of "Four Days" joins up and rushes off into battle.) In "The Raid" the young ensign Alanin's charge into the woods -- a suicidal rush, it turns out -- violates his Captain's order. The charge is the result, apparently, of such misguided affectations (2: 31-34). It would be extreme, however, to suggest that Alanin and characters like him are isolated. In Tolstoy's war stories an unsaid sense of belonging and purpose that exists outside each man's individual and uncontrollable feelings joins the Russian forces. Soldiers and officers have their own feelings, but are joined by a single cause. The mix of noble and natural feelings with cowardly and pretentious ones is an expected element of the portrayal of personal elements of war. And, despite the, at times, seemingly incontestable rightness of the war-cause, part of Tolstoy's objective, it appears, is to present certain feelings that might not be "right" -- like Alanin's -- but that certainly are natural. They are natural emotions that accord with a soldier's initial exposure to battle and his general inexperience in life.

The stories present how every moment of war, like every moment of life, demands from each man a solitary coming to terms with the situation at hand. This understanding is explored on a larger scale and in a non-military setting in the story "The Snowstorm" [Метель 1856]. The approach used in this story parallels what Tolstoy had been doing in his war stories. The story describes apparent physical isolation. Between post stations the central characters lose their way in a snowstorm, a setting that prefigures the one Chekhov will use in "Misery" [Горе 1886]. The narrator can see no way out. His observation late in the story of how the storm had closed them in applies to much of the story's action: "Посмотришь вокруг -- все бело, светло и снежно, нигде ничего, кроме мутного света снега" (2: 252). They are at the beckon of other forces and struggle with unmet expectations, discomfort and fear. The weather,
sleep, dreams and premonitions, other drivers and road markers all come to them unpredictably and affect their future. The sense of bleakness verges, potentially, on expectation of victory over the elements or escape. The solid whiteness caused by the storm at once offers no way out and, yet, as a "blank sheet," provides any outlet to the one with the means to break his own trail. Without such means the characters are hostage to what happens next. They are free and not free. They are alone and vulnerable, providing an image, George Steiner proposes, of "human nakedness."  

In these stories Tolstoy isolates the reactions of characters. He emphasises their aloneness, in some cases, by showing a character's desire to be separate, and, in others, by depicting an aspect of the character's nature that separates him from being his usual self. In each portrayal the stories raise the question "How do these characters face the present?". Although Tolstoy may introduce many characters or defined groups of characters into his stories, he creates the sense that there are many lone characters. When he shows that physical isolation cannot rid an individual of usual thoughts and feelings, he announces his sense of the supremacy of consciousness, a character trait that appears in Garshin's isolation stories more distinctly than in those of Chekhov or Korolenko.

Leskov

Leskov's short fiction presents characters who are not always in the mainstream --

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heretics, often -- and keys on these characters' particular traits in an objective manner. His narrators, like Turgenev's and Tolstoy's, tend to limit their stories to what they can see, hear or remember; rarely do his narratives depict thought processes or interior monologue. Like his contemporaries, Leskov placed his characters in timely and likely contexts -- whether the stories are set in the past or the present. In the introductory paragraph to Leskov's "The Sealed Angel" [Запечатленный ангел 1873] the narrator relates a description that could very well summarise the constituents that form many of Leskov's stories.

Nature brings the members of the group together. Everyone is different and everyone is the same. They are of various ranks and nationalities, they have different sleeping spots and are in assorted stages of warmth and dryness. Each person wants in from the cold, each must be a little crowded, each is with strangers on this night. The owner talks to everybody and to nobody but himself. No one is prepared to leave and no one else will gain entry. Chance gatherings, how natural impulses and convictions guide the

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45Leskov, SS, 5: 222. Subsequent references to Leskov's writings will be to this edition and will be indicated by volume and page number in the text.
ways an individual interacts with others -- these are features that often define the settings, characters and actions of Leskov's stories.

Such social elements run through Leskov's stories, but only inasmuch as their presentation is able, in Leskov's opinion, to affect. The prolific Russian/Soviet critic and author Leonid Grossman reminds us that Leskov had something other than the provision of social topics in mind when he spoke of the "first condition of correct composition" [первое условие правильной композиции].²⁶ Leskov, Grossman states, stressed that the work be entertaining, lively and interesting. One way Leskov achieved this condition was by portraying cavalier outsiders in his stories, characters often at odds with an unjust society who choose to isolate themselves from it.

Leskov's short stories depict a cast of characters who, because of their beliefs and actions, stand apart from the usual community. For the most part they are heretics: they find the beliefs and systems of the time and place unacceptable or wanting and challenge them through their efforts to remedy inadequacies, their non-participation, and, in some cases, active opposition. Vasilii Petrovich Bogoslovskii, the character to whom the title "The Musk-ox" [Овцебык 1862] refers, has ideas to better society but cannot capture an audience. Ovtsebyk is an agitator, the narrator realises during one trying conversation, who is fed up with the indifference of others.

Это было тяжелое молчание. И я и Челновский поняли, что перед нами стоит агитатор -- агитатор искренний и бесстрашный. И он понял, что его понимают, и вдруг вскрикнул:
-- Что ж мне делать! Сердце мое не терпит этой цивилизации, этой нобилизации, этой стервозизации!. -- И он крепко ударил себя кулаком в грудь и тяжело опустился на кресло (6: 60).

In the story “Single-thought” [Однодум 1879] Aleksandr (Aleksashka) Afanasevitch Ryzhov, the hero known as Odnodum, lives rigidly according to the moral rules he has gathered from his reading the Bible. His beliefs are uncompromising and are openly referred to by the narrator as rules. (At one point the narrator records Odnodum’s disapproval with how the governor of the province acted in Church: «Это было против всех правил Рыжова по отношению к богопочитанию и к обязанностям высшего быть примером для низших» (6: 137).) His unwavering adherence confuses others, whose ways are set according to protocol, but provides him with an efficient lifestyle and peace of mind. His integrity receives acceptance from outside his community.

When Odnodum, working in the capacity of governor of his town, shares his beliefs with the visiting (and inspecting) governor of the province, Odnodum’s sincerity is rewarded by the Order of St Vladimir. He is accepted rather than disparaged. The collection of outsiders also includes the title characters of the stories “The Enchanted Pilgrim” [Очарованный странник 1873], “Sheramur” (1878) and “Deathless Golovan” [Несмертельный Голован 1880] and the Old Believers of “The Sealed Angel.” Fliagin, the hero of “The Enchanted Pilgrim” moves through life, refusing to settle anywhere unless forced to do so. The tiny, bearded hero Sheramur is proclaimed a “hero of the belly” [герой брюха] (6: 144) by that story’s narrator. He seeks to ensure that people in need are fed. Golovan (“Deathless Golovan”) exemplifies selfless attention for others. He does not worry for his own life during a plague, for instance (thus, the adjective deathless (6: 207)). Finally, the Old Believers of “The Sealed Angel,” as the story’s skaz narrator, Mark Aleksandrov, recalls, will not recant their beliefs: «Особенно же нам, староверам, тут нравилось, что мы в тогдашнее время повсюду за свой обряд гонению подвергались, а тут нам была льгота» (5: 227). The outsiders hold firmly to
their ideas and ways. The extent of their "outsidedness" is, in part, compounded by the manners in which others relate to them. For instance, the legend surrounding Golovan arises only because his actions are witnessed:

О трогательности и отваге его кровавого над собою поступка люди, вероятно, имели высокое мнение, но судили о нем так, как я сказал: естественных причин ему не доискивались, а, окутав все своею фантазию, сочинили из естественного события баснословную легенду, а из простого, великодушного Голована сделали мифическое лицо, что-то вроде волхва, кудесника, который обладал неодолимым талисманом и мог на все отважиться и нигде не погибнуть (6: 214).

These characters are outsiders who choose to be so, but who do not shy away from being distanced by others. Like the superfluous man of Turgenev's story, these characters belong, but in their own way. Leskov's characters, however, go one step further than Turgenev's character. They forfeit their opportunity to continue to live among others. They wish to live according to their own plans and beliefs. Despite their actively living according to their own codes, these plans and beliefs are not self-centred. In general their ideas reflect a selfless attitude toward life that looks toward others and society as a whole. From his scattered feelings and views the superfluous man is not able to create a code by which to live. Leskov's outsiders move outside the whole rather than forgo their ways. They isolate themselves from the usual community. Yet, in juxtaposition to it, they challenge the ways and choices of that community and try to free it from itself. They are separate but maintain their ties, thus isolated in the full sense of my definition.

In their distanced interaction with usual society, some of these characters exercise their daily activities, marked by this idealism or righteousness, with a certainty

47This is the case, especially, with the righteous characters who people Leskov's stories of the 1880s. See K.A. Lantz, Nikolay Leskov (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), 148.
that appears predictable, no matter how admirable. There is, it might be argued, a
monastic aspect to these dedicated lives, at least monastic in the meaning that a few of
Leskov’s characters have in mind. In “The Musk Ox” and “The Enchanted Pilgrim,” for
instance, the monk’s life appears solitary and uneventful. The narrator of “The Musk-
ox” describes the monk’s life as so monotonous that only the occasional fishing trip
allowed the monks a change (6: 67). As if to symbolise the rigid order or simply the
unchanging nature of their lives, the monks’ hut near the fishing lake, the narrator
recalls, remains unchanged twelve years after his earliest visits (6: 79). In “The
Enchanted Pilgrim” the young Fliagin, when given the chance to choose any path in
life, gives up the possibility of joining a monastery. That choice would have saved him
from a life of going «от одной стражбы к другой, все более и более претерпевая»
(“from one ordeal to the next, enduring more and more” (5: 296)). But later, when he
takes on a monastic life, he is ready to accept and appreciate a life free of such ordeals;
then, he advocates this life’s simplicity and protection from all else: — Здесь покойно,
все равно как в полку, много сходственного, все тебе готовое: и одет, и обут, и
накормлен, и начальство смотрит и повиновения спрашивает» (5: 390). Some
characters come to be this way, come to be devoted to their beliefs and simplicity of life.
I underscore come to be because these characters do not act in ignorance of the world, as
if they had been cloistered away since youth. Rather, they act in response to a corrupt
world when they choose a particular course. The constituents of their isolation make it
a positive condition. The constant, even zealous, patterns formed by their daily conduct
both define them and distance them, both express their uniqueness and keep them from
joining the general community and its usual activities.

In Leskov’s stories these outsiders often relate their convictions in their own
words and actions. The detailed descriptions the narrators provide highlight specific traits of these characters. Leskov goes one step further when defining these characters, as if to ensure that we see them in all their colour. He has them present themselves in their own language, with their own stylistic peculiarities and choices of topics. This type of narration has come to be known as a *skaz* narration, a stylistically individualised narration.\(^4\)

The frame narrators of such stories find the story of the *skaz* narrator worth relating. That narrator happens upon an outsider or stranger who, in the end, has a story to tell. But often that story is coaxed out of the speaker or encouraged. In those instances where a humbler *skaz* narrator may not be motivated simply by the joy of telling, the curiosity and interest of the listener can motivate, or even selectively organise, the narrative. This curiosity and interest propose that what follows deserves to be known or, at least, presented. Any separateness that existed between the frame narrator and the *skaz* narrator, between the listener and teller, is overcome especially if the listener believes the tale to be real. The *skaz* narrator's story and, indirectly, the *skaz* narrator, then, receive approval in the fictional world and, through this acceptance, the character who usually separates himself from social interaction is brought out of isolation into the whole, if just for those moments.

Both Leskov’s wanderers and the structure of his typical skaz story share much with the characters and narratives Korolenko would create through the 1880s and early 1890s. Less commonly heretics, Korolenko’s wanderers, prisoners, escapees, and peasants step, or are pushed, away from society when they seek opportunities to express their independence or satisfy their curiosities, and bring to the stories a level of interest, liveliness, and entertainment that may have appealed to Leskov.

*Dostoevsky*

At the forefront of his stories Dostoevsky invariably portrays the ability of his characters to take part in the world. This aptitude often is emphasised by the heroes’ desire or aversion to participate in that world. Dostoevsky’s heroes commonly wrestle with their predicaments closed off from others in isolation. For some characters isolation is closely aligned with coping in the outside world. In descriptions that portray such coping Dostoevsky distinguishes between being alone and being made to be alone, maintaining one’s individuality in solitude and having it taken away, the bliss of being away from others and the prison of existence. These comments are certainly indicative of Dostoevsky’s later writing, but traces of such aspects of isolation appear already in his stories of the late 1840s.

Early in “Mr Prokharchin” [Господин Прохарчин 1846] the narrator describes a clash of existences when the story’s hero, like others, used to his lone life tucked in a corner behind his screen, finds himself [ochutilsia] among a bunch of energetic young neighbours. Unconscious of some period of transition, during which he was taken from his previous life to this new one, he is caught defenceless. The narrator recalls:

мы не будем объяснять судьбы Семена Ивановича прямо fantastическим
In a similar manner, Ordynov, the hero of "The Landlady" [Хозяйка 1847], «всегда вел жизнь тихую, совершенно уединенную» (1: 424). On finishing his degree, he visited his guardian, a friend of his father’s, and received a bit of money on which he was to live. That same evening,

[он] сторожил первый встречный угол и через час переехал. Там он как будто заерся в монастырь, как будто отрешился от света. Через два года он одичал совершенно.

Он одичал, не замечая того; ему покамест и в голову не приходило, что есть другая жизнь (1: 424).

For these heroes, before their lives begin to change, living alone, if pathetic or strange, is marked by the characters' sense of contentment that characterises the natural state of their existences. While uedinenie and uedinennaia zhizn’ may not imply that a force actively separates these characters from belonging to another whole, the meanings of the words suggest that the choice to not take part in life outside is likely an active

49Dostoevskii, SS, 1: 398-399. Subsequent references to Dostoevsky’s writing, unless noted, will be to this edition and will be indicated by volume and page number in the text.
For the structure of the stories, these early descriptions anticipate juxtapositions in setting and awareness; these introductions gain further significance by emphasising the results of the eventual interaction between the lone characters and their new acquaintances.

Controlled by insecurities that manifest themselves in paranoia and greed, Prokharchin lives unobtrusively until roused by his young neighbours. The force that causes him to keep to himself works well as a defence mechanism as long as others stay at bay. Yet it is just this self-absorption that upsets the merriment of the others and they respond to it by trying Prokharchin's patience and prodding him to find out why he is self-absorbed. Prokharchin is, in effect, ousted from his usual existence and leaves the apartment only to return and be further assailed by his fellow lodgers' pressing curiosity. It drives him mad and he dies.

The self-imposed detachment referred to in the citation from "The Landlady" provides the basis for understanding Ordynov, and stands in comparison with another sense of isolation in the story that surrounds the heroine, Katerina. The story starts when Ordynov leaves his apartment to find another one. The search forces him out of his lone existence of dreaming and studying into a previously unknown world of busy streets, inevitable choices, and challenges. Enchanted by a chance sighting of a young woman, Katerina, he seeks to rent a room near her and the old man she is with, Murin. Upon achieving this, Ordynov learns that Katerina is in Murin's power, a position to

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50 See Vladimir Dal', Tołkowyj słownik živogo velikorusskogo iazyka (S.-Peterburg-Moskva: M.O. Vol'f, 1903-1909), t. 4, 963-964. Note, also, how in the opening to "The Honest Thief" [Честный вор 1848], the active choice of the “unknown” frame-narrator to live such an existence is emphasised by this word. He recounts his cloistered life, how «в моей скромной, холодной квартире появился новый жилец; но я не досадовал, даже про себя был рад. Я вообще живу уединенно, совсем затворником. [...] Десять лет прожив глухарем, я, конечно, привык к уединению» (1: 563).
which, as Ordynov learns, she may have at first consented but which she now feels she cannot escape. The reliability of this version is challenged by Katerina’s apparent mental derangement. Murin, potentially an early sketch of Dostoevsky’s Underground Man and the protagonist of “The Meek One” [Кроткая 1876], Katerina explains, threatens her with damnation and tortures her with reminders of her unpardonable sins from the past. He is, thus, able to control her. The twist is that the shame and disgrace that Murin arouses in her are dear to Katerina. She overwhels Ordynov with the following admission:

что мне до золотой прежней жизни моей, до теплой светлицы, до девичей волшебки! [...] А то мне горько и рвет мне сердце, что я рабыня его опозоренная, что позор и стыд мой самой, бесстыдной, мне люб, что любо жадному сердцу и вспоминать свое горе, словно радость и счастье, -- в том мое горе, что нет силы в нем и нет гнева за обиду своей! (1: 471-472)

Feeling pulled in opposite directions, she wants to rid herself of Murin and needs to be with him. Unable to free Katerina from Murin when presented with the chance to kill the old man and, then, confronted with Murin’s admission that he knows what power he holds over Katerina («Дай ему волшебку, слабому человеку, -- сам её свяжет, назад принесет (1: 496))), Ordynov leaves the couple, apparently defeated, for another apartment.

When they step outside their neatly defined settings or when they have such a space invaded by others, Prokharchin and Ordynov are subjected to the seemingly limitless forces that surround them and they reveal an otherness that to that point is mute, and perhaps, nonexistent. Essentially defenceless -- they seem not to know the “new” world -- they succumb to these influences. Without their usual security they cope poorly. Prokharchin loses his sense when pushed by his roommates and Ordynov is stunned by Katerina and the life she has.
Unlike the various forms of containment in Dostoevsky’s later stories, represented by the “dead house” or the “underground,” the quiet behind the screens or in the apartments away from a corrupt society is the surrounding these earlier characters know best; it is their lives. They are the “little men” who marked Dostoevsky’s and many other Russian writers’ literature in the 1840s. The stories recount the process of the characters’ losing their solitary existence and the repercussions that such a transforming creates. To the point of their interaction with others, Prokharchin and Ordynov possess no need or desire to communicate. Then, they are forced into action. Until they are confronted with others, they have no personal stories, no active interplay with a changing world. Their isolation is a static state that preserves them. But the fate of the world seems to draw them from this peaceful -- if uneventful -- hideaway to torment them with an opposite type of life and to cause them to defend themselves and challenge others. They are not up to the task. In essence, until this clash, their existence is a “dead” one, but one that lacks spite for it knows no challenges. Alternatively, Katerina and Murin have stories and their actions exhibit a collage of competing feelings, not the least of which includes the random tormenting of others and themselves.

It is reasonable to suggest that the contrasts that appear in the forefront of these early stories have parallels in Dostoevsky’s later stories. For the remainder of this section I will show how in some of his later works he portraits the inner battles that develop from the characters’ struggles to face unwanted elements of their personalities, to work out competing ideas and beliefs, and to distinguish between their sense of self and what in fact they are. The portrayals also include juxtapositions of private space to public world and inner feeling to outer appearance, that appeared also in the stories of
the late 1840s. The later characters are responding to interaction with others when
they close themselves off, while the early ones take part in that significant early
encounter and reflect why it might matter, chiefly because that encounter contrasts the
isolation that was their lives.

In *Notes from Underground* [Записки из подполья 1864] and the “fantastic”
story that comprises the November 1876 entry to *A Writer’s Diary*, “The Meek One,”
aspects of isolation arise from the character’s choice to close himself off from the world
he knows (and, even, to close another in with him), as well as from the mental reasoning
that underlies his choice. A physical “cutting off” is prompted by a psychological
reaction to the world. The character quells natural outlets of his own life forces. He
tucks himself away, brooding and scheming. As is the case, to a great extent, with
Katerina and Murin, in the later portrayals characters perform restrictive actions and
are aware of the pain they cause to themselves and others. Unlike Katerina and
Murin’s choice, however, theirs is not a passive removal from the world but is an active
retaliation to the destruction that they profess others cause, yet which they themselves
provokes. They spurn the world and distance themselves from it. They have been

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51 *Notes from Underground* is longer than other works that I will consider in this study.
I include it here because it shares much with “The Meek One.” I feel justified in doing this for
technical reasons, too. Early publication of the work carried the sub-title *повест’* (4: 594).

52 Robert Louis Jackson unites the appearance in Dostoevsky’s later work of these
circumstances, notably the characters’ loss of freedom, to their presentation in *Notes from the
House of the Dead*. See his *The Art of Dostoevsky. Deliriums and Nocturnes* (Princeton:
Princeton University Press, 1981), especially 160-161. On distinctions in the writings of
Dostoevsky’s “post-exile” period as they relate to character isolation see also Geoffrey C. Kabat,
*Ideology and Imagination. The Image of Society in Dostoevsky* (New York: Columbia University

53 For philosophical readings of this aspect of characters’ actions in Dostoevsky’s writing,
especially as they relate to the writings of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, see Ralph Harper, *The
Seventh Solitude. Man’s Isolation in Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche* (Baltimore: The
Johns Hopkins Press, 1965) and Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of Modern
hurt, humiliated as they see it, and shut themselves up to hash over plans to retaliate and, less consciously, to stew in solitude over the impressions that flood their consciousnesses. Dostoevsky, notes Michael Andre Bernstein, "makes painfully evident that their solitude is chosen out of wounded vanity -- out of their fear of rejection or, just as torturing, the fear of being welcomed, but at less than their own self-estimation -- and not out of inner self-sufficiency." Their isolation is two things: a site for examining thoughts and actions -- the limits within which they impose themselves on another -- and the result of how their heightened sensibility imposes their consciousness on them themselves. It is at once a material and mental, defensive and offensive relationship to the world. Their thoughts and utterances draw from the past and propose for the future, creating a voice in the present that is self-centred, nasty and, potentially, tormenting. There is no goal strong enough to override their feelings and the pain they cause, and the characters act impulsively. The mixture of acting impulsively and reacting through pain affects the order of their outcries and backlashes.

Writing the notes that form Notes from Underground alone in his room and buffered from society by wet, turbid [mutnyi] -- be it murky, unclear or stirred up -- snow, the Underground Man is there because of his individual reaction to, and suffering from, that society. His view is made unclear and disturbed as well by his hypersensitive consciousness. The "underground" is at once a physical and figurative

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Bernstein 99.

Again, the symbolic mutnyi sneg cuts off a character from the rest of the world. Recall Tolstoy's story "The Snowstorm."
construct. It is associated with a temperament and lack of clarity that are both omnipresent and unpleasant. The mental awareness creates physical discomfort as the sensory overpowers the spiritual. The "underground" can be an escape -- a means to cope -- and an awareness that torments -- a condition with which to cope.

The Underground Man is isolated and senses his isolation. The act of writing these notes occupies his time and expresses his thoughts. In addition, he is always aware that the "notes" [zapiski] will have an audience, that they will engage interlocutors. Knowing this, he conditions his action in accordance with what he perceives might be the outcome of the action. He rarely acts unknowingly. The text, too, is a barrier that separates his argument (if not him) from active engagement with others. Such distance allows him to express himself wilfully.

The Soviet scholar A.P. Skaftymov, noting the double-edged nature of *Notes from Underground* in response to its early misreadings, explains the Underground Man

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56 At one point in Part II, lying beside Liza and scrounging to give words to his feeling that physical love has lost meaning save for physical satisfaction, the Underground Man describes how the "underground" can be both physical and figurative. "Угрюмая мысль зародилась в моем мозгу и прошла по всему телу каким-то скверным ощущением, похожим на то, когда входишь в подполье, сырое и затхлое" (4: 207).

57 On the mix of voicing feelings and wanting to engage others in *Notes from Underground* Bakhtin writes that "this intense relationship to another's consciousness in the Underground Man is complicated by an equally intense relationship to his own self." Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Caryl Emerson, ed. and trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 229. Tzvetan Todorov has identified two "others" whom the Underground Man anticipates stirring, those who may be sensitive to his brazen words and tone -- the Everyman reader -- and those with whom he takes an ideological position -- the "progressive" thinkers and writers of the 1860s with whom he polemises. Tzvetan Todorov "*Notes from Underground,*" in *Genres in Discourse*, Catherine Porter, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 78-79.

58 Gary Saul Morson notes "[f]or all his desire to surprise, the underground man can be counted on to do the most spiteful and self-destructive thing" in his *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 36.
as both the denouncer [oblichitel'] and the denounced [oblikaemyi]. Standing back, but never completely removed from society, the Underground Man criticises the view that man strives rationally for his ultimate self-advantage from a position that allows him to act as he wishes, to choose for himself what is right for him alone. Unable consciously to enact an alternative plan for society, his underground shows itself to be not a hideaway for contemplation, but a place to protest that of which he will always be a part. For as these few contradictions show, while he speaks his mind, his like actions show him to be a product of that society on which he comments. Moreover, only to his mind is he a special participant in society: to others he is non-existent or meddlesome, unnecessary, and, accordingly, is avoided or abandoned.

Although he wants and needs to contact and interact in the world, he cannot accept it because he feels that he knows what will result. He distances himself from it by removing himself physically in Part I and emotionally through malice in Part II. Feeling that his consciousness has caused him to be contained and set aside, despite his removal being an active choice, he wants to rebel, to show himself to be an individual. But he cannot break free, cannot overcome himself. Unwilling to subordinate himself to anything, he lashes out both in dreams and reality. He reveals his need to “affirm himself,” the need of his “human spirit to maintain the sense of its own freedom,” observe Jackson and Joseph Frank. His acute consciousness causes an outward reaching, expressive and supportive personality to be replaced by an inward-looking, expressive and supportive personality to be replaced by an inward-looking,


60See Todorov.

highly sensitive, defensive ego. He builds arguments and excuses to support his stance (in the “underground”) and they, as clearly as his acts, distinguish and separate him from others. He preaches the priority of individual will -- «Стою я... за свой каприз и за то, чтоб он был мне гарантирован, когда понадобится» (4: 161) -- even to harm oneself, over action according to reason, but never fulfils his aspirations. He is caught between being a man of action and an invisible voice. Fully conscious of, and overly sensible to, the world around him, he does not possess the will to act through his suffering. In Part I he only musters a seemingly unending supply of spite. In Part II he voices a dream and aids Liza, only to show his inability to act out the dream and, by abusing Liza, his penchant for demanding his own dominance. He cannot settle for love, equality or subordination.

His heightened sensibilities are defenceless against real and potential challenges and he is oppressed morally and spiritually. His two defences, to step outside society and to act in a manner that is painful to others, both defend him and secure his position in the underground. He despairs and contests through his outbursts and their chaotic manner; he reflects on his freedom and his misery. Enslaved by his consciousness, he is alone and in pain, yet is conscious of himself. He is separate from others: he cannot mix, he cannot share, he cannot even upset another into action, but he must dominate, no matter the suffering it may cause him, if not in reality, then, at least, in his dreams and thoughts.

In “The Meek One” the central character’s interior monologue forms the story and is framed by two similar and instructive sentences: «... Вот, пока она здесь -- еще

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His focus is himself, despite his dead wife lying in the adjacent room. And, except for her corpse, he is alone. The ellipses that introduce the sentences suggest the lines stand on their own, separate from a thought pattern, and form part of a stream of consciousness narrative. He is trying to make order of his thoughts a few hours after the death of his young wife. The story consists of the uncontrolled flow of impressions and questions with which he contends. The narration of the hero’s thoughts consists of the following main points.

A pawnbroker takes advantage of a client’s poverty to take revenge on the world for a misfortune he experienced. Accused of cowardice and allowing his regiment to be defamed, he was discharged from military service dishonourably. After a time of impoverishment he received money on the death of an aunt and started a pawnbrokerage with the hope of fulfilling a dream, a goal that has retaliation and revenge as its base.

"Вы отвергли меня, вы, люди то есть, вы прогнали меня с презрительным молчанием. На мой страстный порыв к вам вы ответили мне обидой на всю мою жизнь. Теперь я, стало быть, вправе был оградиться от вас стеной, собрать эти тридцать тысяч рублей и окончить жизнь где-нибудь в Крыму, на Южном берегу, в горах и виноградниках, в своем имени, ..." (10: 394 -- Quotation marks in the original).

Following her first visits to his shop the pawnbroker inquires about the young woman and learns that her only family, her cruel aunts, is preparing to toss her out or marry her off to a shopkeeper who has already sent two wives, on account of his beatings, to their graves. Attracted to her greater helplessness, the pawnbroker offers her the option of marriage to him, a proposal that, in effect, becomes a contract for her life.

When married, he limits her speech and actions, exercising his self-declared right over
her and slowly hacks away at her spirit. Anguished, she takes her life by jumping from a window.

Like *Notes from Underground* "The Meek One" takes place on two temporal levels, the present -- the writing by the Underground Man and the pawnbroker's coming to terms with his thoughts -- and the past of their remembrances. The writing and thoughts are given structure by recollections. What troubles them -- their having been humiliated -- is voiced and recalled. Their efforts to dominate over another, in both cases lonely young women, and their success in doing this are related with disturbing relish.

Isolation describes three sets of circumstances: when the pawnbroker shuts himself away from society after his discharge, when he takes the young woman away from the rest of the world, and when *only* his mind occupies him for the course of the story time -- the time he is walking about his house trying to give order to his thoughts. Through each of these situations he makes his own position foremost. He locks himself away, he controls her physically and psychologically, directing her actions, emotions and thoughts, and she leaves him to cope on his own again. The story is about his "underground" existence and his efforts to spoil her through psychological abuse.

When alone he wrestles with his thoughts and justifies his action. Free from challenge or contradiction that cannot be reasoned away, he can seek to make his interpretations of society and the world's workings fit his scheme. This stance is opposed when he takes in the young woman, for she represents a challenge to his ideas and, therefore, to his ability to mould the world. He seeks an environment he can control. He isolates himself. He must be alone and, therefore, to have her there and maintain this status he must "dehumanize" her. His retaliation on the world would be
more complete if he could change her. His need to determine everything reflects both how he lives and how he is unable to live.

This isolation, then, is a destructive state. He is already rid of feelings for others and seeks to destroy this in her. Fully aware of the isolation he has imposed on himself, he wants to impose it -- and the ideas he professes in such a world -- on others. He does not seek to change his isolation; rather, he thrives on it and wants to spread it. Alternatively, his presence must be acknowledged.

Prokharchin and Ordynov contentedly live their early lives in isolation. They are not concerned with the outside world and do not know its effects. They know only what their senses prefer. The meek one knows what she needs and deserves from the world, and appreciates the existence of others. The Underground Man and the pawnbroker feel they know this, too, but they ignore the fact that they share the world; they seek the freedom to express themselves. They cannot look at others in the same way that they regard themselves. Their point of view must control their world and that of others. In his late stories Dostoevsky's characters seek ways, if not plans, to exist in, and subject, the greater world, and they end up doing this in isolation. In the stories of the 1840s the characters who choose isolation are forced to try the world and wish they hadn't.

Nastiness, whether inherent or ingrained, and a lack of understanding of the kinds seen in Dostoevsky's short fiction are character traits that Chekhov will show to be more typical than Dostoevsky's extreme situations might propose, features that lead to characters' being isolated ("At the Mill") and isolating or abusing others ("The Daughter of Albion," "Aniuta," "The Witch," "The Chorus Girl"). Garshin, too, will create such a foul, prejudiced character in "From the Reminiscences of Private Ivanov," an officer who distinguishes himself from the peasants who serve beneath him and his
fellow officers, and that character will find himself cut off from his countrymen. Garshin will also have his characters contend with extreme moments. More directly, though, Garshin’s kinship with Dostoevsky will emerge from his similar understanding of the power of one’s mind, particularly individual conscience in Garshin’s case, to direct a character’s awareness of the goings-on around him and, thus, cut him off from typical happenings. And, hints of Dostoevsky seem apparent in Korolenko’s work, too. Although not considered here, Dostoevsky’s acclaimed large work on isolation, Notes from the House of the Dead, may have provided Korolenko a clue for how to overcome the “fictional gap” that separates the member of the intelligentsia from communicating freely with the peasant; that is also to say, a clue for how to overcome any tendency towards didacticism or woodenness that might result from his efforts to portray artistically the populist ideology in which he placed hope: Dostoevsky’s large work proposed confining such characters together. Like Turgenev, Korolenko will match up peasants alone with his sympathetic intelligent narrator on the peasants’ home property and even on mysterious coach rides. But like Dostoevsky, Korolenko will place a similar narrator in Siberian huts and communities, on the road to exile, and in jail -- apparently isolated settings where the narrator will have little alternative but to comply with and observe the prevailing culture that surrounds him.

63“For what distinguishes House of the Dead,” writes Joseph Frank, “from all works of a similar kind is this unprecedented effort by an educated Russian to grasp and portray the moral-spiritual essence of a peasant world that he has been forced to accept provisionally as his own” (Frank, Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, 1860-1865, 222).
Three: Garshin and Isolation as Literary Device

Biographical Sketch

Since his childhood Garshin often found himself removed from his usual life, cut off, as it were, by powers outside his control. Garshin was born on February 2, 1855 in the Bakhmut district of the Ekaterinoslav province [guberniiia], Ukraine. He was the third of five children born into an erratic family life. In Garshin's fifth year his mother left her husband for the children's tutor, abandoning Garshin but taking his elder brothers. Garshin's mother brought him to St Petersburg in 1863, where he received a general education, excelling at the natural sciences, writing and literature. In 1872 he suffered his first in a series of nervous breakdowns that continued throughout his life.

In 1874 Garshin entered the Mining Institute, more by default than because of actual desire. During his student years Garshin attended theatrical and musical performances regularly, as well as meetings and exhibitions of the Peredvizhniki artists. His letters, for the most part, recall warmly the performances and his friends, and his

1My chief sources for this sketch are S. Durylin, "Vse. M. Garshin (Iz zapisok biografa)," Zven'ia 5 (1935), 571-681, Peter Henry, A Hamlet of his Time. Vsevolod Garshin: The Man, his Works, and his Milieu (Oxford: Willem A. Meeuws, 1983), 27-234, A. Latynina, Vsevolod Garshin: Tvorchestvo i sud'ba (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1986) and Garshin's letters, which comprise Volume Three of V. M. Garshin, Polnoe sobranie sochenii (Moskva-Leningrad: Academia, 1934) and which subsequently will be referred to as Pis'ma.

2In pages 12 to 26 of her book, Latynina contends that family conflicts during Garshin’s childhood played a significant role in his personal and literary development. At one point, she forcefully notes, «И что же, стираются из памяти следы семейной драмы? Нет, разумется» (19). In general she has a bleak view of Garshin’s childhood.

3Despite Garshin’s aspirations to study medicine -- a subject, at the time, that seemed to attract the more agitating of the students -- enrollment to such institutes was tightly regulated (Henry, A Hamlet of his Time, 33).
perceptive articles attest to Garshin's interest in painting. Since his school days he had been writing essays, verse and short fiction, the results of which appeared in school papers and, later, newspapers such as Novosti. In 1876 he published a satirical work depicting the goings-on of a local zemstvo. The short piece appeared in the newspaper Molva.

When in 1876 Serbia declared war on Turkey, Garshin, unable to tolerate his own inactivity in the campaign while the Turks, according to accounts, slaughtered Bulgarian citizens indiscriminately, hoped to join the volunteer corps. His efforts were thwarted for administrative reasons, but in April 1877, when Russia, too, joined the

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1See his five articles «Вторая выставка «Общества выставок художественных произведений»; «Новая картина Семирадского «Светочи христианства»; «Конкурс на постоянной выставке художественных произведений»; «Императорская Академия Художеств за 1876-1877 учебный год», all of 1877; and «Заметки о художественных выставках» (1887). They are reprinted in V.M. Garshin, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii V.M. Garshina (S.-Peterburg: A.F. Marks, 1910).

2It was called "The Actual History of a Zemstvo Meeting at N." [Подлинная история Энского земского собрания]. In one letter Garshin referred to the work as «мои первые литературные опыты» ["my first literary ventures"]. See Garshin, Pis’ma, 76 (26 March 1876).

3In a letter of 12-13 April 1877, Garshin will explain why he joins up in the same way that his hero does in the story "Four Days" [Четыре дня 1877]: «Мамочка, я не могу прятаться за стенами заведения, когда мои сверстники львы и груди подставляют под пули» (Garshin, Pis’ma, 116).

4There is not complete agreement on why Garshin was not allowed to join the volunteers in 1876. Edmund Yarwood suggests Garshin was not of age: see his Vsevolod Garshin (Boston: Twayne Publishers. 1981), 17. Durylin notes that «В Сербию Гаршину не пустили русские власти, объявив, что его очередь придет, когда сама Россия объявит войну, но на русско-турецкую войну он пошел одним из ранних добровольцев» (Durylin 574). Latynina found that Prince Kropotkin, at that time the governor general of Khar’kov, where Garshin spent the summer of 1876, «в паспорте ему [Гаршину] отказал, заметив, что скоро будет своя война. Гаршин возобновляет попытки добыть разрешения на выезд в Петербурге, но они также оканчиваются безуспешно» (Latynina 54). Henry agrees with Durylin and Latynina (Henry, A Hamlet of his Time, 37). Regardless of whose reading is most accurate, Garshin did not go at first and would not overlook the laws that blocked his way, as a letter of 9 September 1876 to his mother indicates: «В Сербию уехать нет возможности; велегальным путем я не хочу. К тому же скоро война; будет наверно» (Garshin, Pis’ma, 92).
war, he enlisted in the Imperial Army. He served for about four months, coping well with the emotional and physical rigours that accompanied long marches and unpleasant living conditions. Garshin was injured the second time he saw action. His leg wound was serious enough to cause him to be sent back to St Petersburg following short recovery periods in Bulgaria and then with his mother, who had moved to Kharkov.

Events and impressions from his four months exposed to military and war-time life appear to have provided a base for some of his military tales. He had worked on a short story, “Four Days” [Четыре дня], and a documentary account, “The Action at Aiaslar” [Аясларское дело], while recovering, and then submitted “Four Days” for publication. It appeared in the more populist of the thick journals, Otechestvennye zapiski [Отечественные записки], before his return to Petersburg, and gained immediate recognition as a successful work, while bringing to Garshin the admiration and respect of most who read it.9

By early 1878 Garshin was speaking with confidence about his writing, no matter what themes his stories expressed. Such assurance surfaces in a February letter to his mother -- as does an early indication of a theme that pervades Garshin’s fiction: how a character is overcome from within -- where he writes briefly of the story he had been working on, “An Incident” [Происшествие], and his sense

что «О.З.» не поместят ее. Им ведь все надо «умного», чтобы читатель всегда помнил, что мужик страдает, а он, читатель, -- подлец. Все это хорошо, но ведь есть и другие темы ...

Отрывок мой до войны, до социальных, политических и иных вопросов

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8Durylin most thoroughly covers the possible reasons that Garshin joined up, offering both his own interpretations and the thoughts of others. See Durylin 575-576, 579.

In the fall of 1878 Garshin resigned from the army, but not before he had started work on other military tales. The results include three works: "A Very Brief Romance" [Очень коротенький роман 1878], "The Coward" [Трус 1879], and an unfinished fragment "So began my misfortunes ..." [Так начались мои несчастья ...]. Only the last one was not completed.  

Until March of 1880 Garshin's thought and activities expressed his immersion in St Petersburg life -- that is, in a literary centre, a political capital, and a city with its share of obvious poverty and social failings. In addition to "A Very Brief Romance" and "The Coward" Garshin published three stories over these eighteen months -- "An Encounter" [Встреча], "The Artists" [Художники] and "Attalea princeps" -- and completed two others that were published shortly after -- "The Orderly and Officer" [Денщик и офицер] and "A Night" [Ночь]. Moreover, Garshin undertook editorial and administrative work for the journal *Russkoe bogatstvo* [Русское богатство] and

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10Garshin, *Pis’ma*, 154 (16 February 1878).

11Apparently it was written in 1878. For the text see *Russkaiia literatura* 2 (1962), 180-184. "The Coward" appeared in *Otechestvennye zapiski* 3 (1879), 144-164 and "A Very Brief Romance" appeared in the journal *Strekoza* 10 (1878), 7, 8, 11.

12"An Incident," *Otechestvennye zapiski* 3 (1878), 129-144, "The Coward," *Otechestvennye zapiski* 3 (1879), 144-164, "A Meeting," *Otechestvennye zapiski* 4 (1879), 555-572, "The Artists," *Otechestvennye zapiski* 9 (1879), 103-118, "Attalea princeps," *Russkoe bogatstvo* 1 (1880), 142-150, "The Orderly and Officer," *Russkoe bogatstvo* 3 (1880), 109-125, "A Night," *Otechestvennye zapiski* 6 (1880), 397-412. Despite my gathering these works under the designation "stories," it should be noted that Garshin did not object to the novel (i.e., a large work) as an artistic form. He considered writing a large work, most notably his projected novel *People and War* [Люди и война], of which "The Orderly and Officer" was to be the first part.
attended and reviewed art exhibitions. His stories invariably were topical, clearly reflecting both social concerns and perceptions of the emotions that issues so assorted as prostitution, industrialisation, loneliness and philistinism could produce.

It was a turbulent time politically. The revolutionary movement of the 1860s and 1870s more and more had become shaded by terrorist impulses, most notably by those promoted by such groups as “The People’s Will” [Narodnaia volia]. Garshin was sensitive to the needs of the masses and the seeming fact that the government was paying little attention to them. In fact, a good case could be made that he was revolutionary in spirit. However, he could not tolerate the revolutionary’s extreme methods; he could not think of harming someone he might even consider his enemy. His hyper-sensitivity mixed with his hope for an ideal world, a hope grounded in his belief that the world could remedy its wrongs through forgiveness. Eventually, a tension that troubled him to the point of despair emerged from his struggle to see in a terrorist the potential for goodness.

In Petersburg on 20 February 1880, a young terrorist, Mlodetskii, attempted to shoot Count Loris-Melikov, the head of a special administrative commission and the

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13 Henry, A Hamlet of his Time, 113.


15 For an example of this pacifist stance, see Durylin 591-592. Durylin refers to Garshin’s close friend, the painter Malyshev, who recalls Garshin’s bitterness in response to a February 1880 terrorist attack on the Winter Palace. Others saw reflections of political neutrality in Garshin’s actions. According to Durylin, Garshin’s contemporary P.F. Iakubovich saw in Garshin “какая-то тревожная идейная и жизненная безмечность” (Durylin 585). In 1895 Garshin’s mother would explain Garshin’s position (in 1880-1881) in a similar way: “По своей редкой доброте, честности, справедливости, он не мог пристать ни к какой стороне и глубоко страдал за тех и за других”. Cited in Durylin 590 (italics in Durylin’s text).
eventual minister of the interior. Mlodetskii missed, was arrested, and the next day was sentenced to be hanged on the 22nd. Garshin wrote to and, it seems, visited Loris-Melikov in an effort to free Mlodetskii -- because he felt, to quote Peter Henry, "great pity for the misguided young terrorist," and believed that forgiveness was the only way to treat such a wayward action. Garshin also believed that if anyone were to consider his plea to spare Mlodetskii, it might be Loris-Melikov. Loris-Melikov did not change the sentence and Garshin, extremely saddened and agitated by the outcome and, most likely, exhausted by his efforts and emotions, left St Petersburg in the direction of Moscow.

His journey took him to Moscow, Tula and Tolstoy's estate at Yasnaya Polyana. He met with Tolstoy and then set off, with no apparent destination, to wander throughout Tula and Orel provinces. Worried by Garshin's silence -- he was a regular correspondent -- his family finally tracked him down at an estate in Orel province and returned him to Kharkov.

Garshin had a history of reacting intensely to extreme circumstances. The reactions were relatively rare and were marked by severe bouts of melancholy and concentrated hyperactivity. Before the Mlodetskii affair Garshin had been showing

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16 For a sense of what people felt for Loris-Melikov in general and for an account of the likelihood of Garshin's visit to Loris-Melikov, see especially Durylin 592-610.


18 Durylin 592-593.

19 For a first-hand description of this visit, see the account of Tolstoy's son, Ilia, who was almost 14 at the time: I.L. Tolstoi, *Moi vospominaniia* (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969), 156-160.
signs that he was bothered by life in St Petersburg.\textsuperscript{20} The execution, apparently, was more than he could bear.

Less than a month after his brother Evgenii had brought Garshin to Kharkov, Garshin disappeared, returning to Orel province. This time others got to Garshin first, and Evgenii located his brother in a local asylum. Garshin was horribly angry and had to be straitjacketed for the return trip to Kharkov. Once there, he was put in the Saburova Dacha, a mental institution, where he remained for four months. After a short stay in an institution in St Petersburg, a place he had stayed at the time of his first breakdown in 1872, he moved to his uncle’s estate on the Black Sea coast. The manic state had given way to depression. From November 1880 Garshin recovered there for some eighteen months.\textsuperscript{21}

In May 1882 Garshin left his uncle’s estate for St Petersburg. On Turgenev’s invitation, Garshin spent part of that summer at Spasskoe, Turgenev’s estate, returning to St Petersburg in September. Due to an illness, Turgenev did not leave Paris to join Garshin, but Garshin enjoyed his time there nonetheless.

From that autumn until his death on 24 March 1888, Garshin re-established his active participation in St Petersburg life. He married in February 1883 and for most of this period held a post with the railway that earned him an income but did not impinge too much on his literary activity. The topics he wrote on were far-reaching, raising questions, for example, about art, the role of the intelligentsia, and views of evil, as well as reconsidering war and military life. The forms he chose ranged from epistolary

\textsuperscript{20}See again the letter of 16 February 1878, where he claims to his mother «Петербург мне надоел ужасно» [“I’m horribly sick of Petersburg”]. Garshin, Pis’ma, 154.

\textsuperscript{21}For many of these details I rely on Henry’s, A Hamlet of his Time, 103-126.
prose, the fairy tale and autobiography to lyric verse, the critical essay, and short fiction, and his style expressed features common to romanticism, impressionism and the most objective realism. During some anxious times for publishers and writers following the assassination of Aleksandr II (13 March 1881)\textsuperscript{22} -- the government closed Otechestvennye zapiski in 1884, banished Ertel, Mikhailovskii and others, and chastised Saltykov-Shchedrin -- Garshin worked closely with journals and other writers, both those who were established and others who were just starting out. He translated and also volunteered his time to the Litfond, the literary welfare organisation. Early in this period, he wrote what may be his most well-known and accomplished story, "The Red Flower" [Красный цветок 1883], a work that recalls his time in the Saburova Dacha.\textsuperscript{23} Over those five-and-a-half years Garshin published no less than eight other short prose works, a modest output, but one that suggested his improving and diverse talents.\textsuperscript{24}

This sketch of Garshin's short, but eventful, life reveals his inescapable exposure to potentially exacting forms of isolation: family strife, nervous breakdowns, despair caused by hyper-sensitivity, being institutionalised. Despite his benevolent social outlook, popularity, involvement in literary and non-literary communities, he often

\textsuperscript{22}Until that point, Orlando Figes explains, although divisions existed among the ruling elite, chiefly between reformists and supporters of traditional tsarist order, Aleksandr II recognised the need for reform, taking on reformist ministers and authorising a project for a constitution. On his death, his son, Aleksander III, initiated a series of counter-reforms, believing that liberal reforms would only continue to produce revolutionaries. See Figes's exemplary study A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924 (London: Pimlico, 1997), 40-42. A People's Tragedy was first published by Jonathan Cape in 1996.

\textsuperscript{23}It was first published in Otechestvennye zapiski 10 (1883), 297-310.

\textsuperscript{24}Such noted contemporaries as Turgenev, Gleb Uspenskii and Merezhkovskii lauded the sincerity and talent they saw in Garshin's writing. See Turgenev's 1880 letter to Garshin in I.S. Turgenev, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v dvadtsati vos'mi tomakh. Pis'ma 12, book 2: 273-274, Gleb Uspenskii's description in "Smert' V.M. Garshina," in Pamiati V.M. Garshina. Khudozhestvenno-literaturnyi sbornik (SPb.: 1889), 158-159, and Merezhkovskii I: 204.
found himself isolated from the very public interaction that attracted him. The case might be made that he had an insider’s perspective on such understandings, an aptitude, it might be further argued in hindsight, that offered Garshin fruitful resources with which to portray in prose fiction personal experiences of isolation.

The Garshin Story and Isolation

A typical Garshin story tells of how some set of circumstances troubles a character, and then charts how the character responds to that troubling situation. It focuses on the character’s private reactions (rather than public or shared ones), depicting the particular significance the situation has for the character and describing both how the character acts within the limits of the troubling situation and how he considers his own position in that situation. The troubles might be described as moral ones that generally result from the coming together of different, often opposite, viewpoints that Garshin’s characters espouse. When confronted with this specific troubling situation, they find their seemingly intrinsic social structure challenged. The challenges lead the

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25 That is to say, moral in a wide, descriptive sense that stresses activity, not just answers or guidelines. In his entry, “Ethics,” in Critical Terms for Literary Study, 2nd ed., Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, eds. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), Geoffrey Galt Harpham writes that “[e]thics is the arena in which the claims of otherness -- the moral law, the human other, cultural norms, the Good-in-itself, etc. -- are articulated and negotiated” (394 -- my emphasis).

26 The titles of some tales announce the prominence of differing viewpoints in Garshin’s stories. “An Encounter” evidently will portray at least two sets of opinions. “The Coward” implies the evaluation of one force by another. The plural form “The Artists” anticipates various creative characters. The titles “Orderly and Officer” and “The Tale of the Toad and the Rose” [Сказка о жабе и розе 1884] propose that the foreground of the stories will reveal at least two protagonists.

27 One critic goes as far as to note "po [Garshin’s] герои изображаются в критическую минуту их жизни -- в момент наивысшего духовного "взрыва", когда им, подобно героям Достоевского (Раскольникову, Ивану Карымазову и др.), надобно "мысль разрешить". See A.E. Iakunina, “Traditsii F.M. Dostoevskogo v tvorchestve V.M. Garshina,” Vestnik moskovskogo
characters to wonder about who or what they are, to question their attitudes and to consider situations they had not anticipated. A typical Garshin story, then, shows Garshin’s passionate concern with how an individual bears up under the questions that society raises before him and that he poses to himself.

Such a situation is not unlike those found in the works of many other writers of the period. What distinguishes Garshin’s stories is the constant attention he gives to a character’s struggle with his conscience. His lead characters tend to be hypersensitive to their own acts and thoughts, astutely aware (sometimes painfully so) of their involvement in the world and always critical of their own attitudes and actions.

Garshin’s concern, in fact, is in how his characters are affected by this sense of their involvement in the world and always critical of their own attitudes and actions. Garshin’s stories reflect this by showing Garshin’s passionate concern with how an individual bears up under the questions that society raises before him and that he poses to himself.

For examples of comparisons, consider the following selection: with Nekrasov see P.V. Bekedin, “Nekrasovskoe v tvorchestve V.M. Garshina,” Russkaia literatura 3 (1994), 105-127; with Dostoevsky see Jackson, Dostoevsky’s Underground Man, especially 74-81; with Tolstoy see Henry, A Hamlet of his Time, 191-218. For ambitious surveys of Russian literature’s war writers see S. Aschevskii, Russkie pisateli i voina (Moskva: Zadruga, 1915) and D. Tamarchenko, Tema voiny v literature (L.-M.: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1933), especially 41-63.

of involvement. His stories are carefully designed workrooms, to borrow an image, in which he explores characters’ mental and physical responses at a particularly significant moment in their lives and how these responses reflect each character’s perception of the world. While these traits anticipate those more commonly ascribed to the modern tradition, Garshin’s emphasis on consciousness, key moments in a character’s life, narrative order and social questions reveals his indebtedness and ties to early- and mid-nineteenth century fictional writing. In one sense, Garshin’s constant interest in isolation reflects in his writing a coming together of “old” and “new” traditions. More obviously, though, by placing his characters in isolation, Garshin avails himself of a means to concentrate on the activities of individuals under very limited and intense conditions.

A sizeable body of Garshin criticism examines how he describes lone characters in contact with their fictional worlds, and rightly so. From his earliest literary success -- the military tale “Four Days,” in which a wounded soldier lies on the edge of a battle field for four days, waiting for his company to find him -- Garshin’s stories, especially his earlier ones, tend to draw attention to single experiences, rather than to collective or general ones. Take, for instance, the awarenesses provided by the alternating first-

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31 For one reading of how Garshin reflects the state of a character’s mind, see Varnai.

32 For a brief discussion of characteristics common to those writers who give a primary position to a character’s perceptions, see Kramer, “Impressionist Tendencies.” Kramer assigns this feature to his definition of “impressionist” writers. To depict confusion dramatically, Kramer writes, “the impressionist focussed not on events themselves but rather on the way the protagonist perceives what is happening around him” (341).
person narratives that form the story “An Incident.” The personal voices relate the thoughts and feelings, as well as the fears and expectations, of the two central characters. The story juxtaposes the voice of a young prostitute to that of the young man who tries to save her; in doing so, he believes he will also save himself.33 Similarly, the heroes of “A Coward,” “An Encounter” and “Artists” are matched up against characters who think differently, but, just as in “An Incident,” the match-up is not the main point in the stories. Instead, each character’s self-examination appears as the stories’ focus. The hero of “A Coward” is not convinced that he should have to go to war, while his acquaintances cannot understand how he can question the act. This inner debate moves the short narrative. “An Encounter” brings together old friends who reveal their tainted attitudes when they disclose that they seek, more than anything, remuneration for their apparently honourable actions. The naive expectations of one hero are brutally challenged by the ideas and achievements of the other. And “Artists” relates the effects a painting has on the story’s protagonists.34 In these stories, Garshin’s careful attention to the effects that the debates and differing viewpoints have on the characters wholly outweighs the emphasis he places on the topic of the debate.

The stories “Attalea princeps” and “A Night” more definitively portray solitary characters who are separate from any whole. The narrator of “Attalea princeps” tells

33Garshin would re-work these character types in his longish story “Nadezhda Nikolaevna” (1885), but would continue to emphasise the characters’ personal impressions.

34This story usually is simplified as a portrayal of two rival attitudes to art. Latynina (124-125), following Korolenko’s lead, emphasises the effect of the painting as a controlling factor, making the work more substantial, and offering a fuller reading: "Во всяком случае, интерпретировать спор Рябинина и Делова как спор сторонников социального и чистого искусства, а рассказ -- «Художники» -- как столкновение двух взглядов на искусство, значит сильно упрощать его" (124).
how a palm-tree, the largest and most “ambitious” specimen in a conservatory’s
[oranzhereia] collection, attempts to attain liberty by breaking through the roof that
contains it. Read by some as an allegorical comment either on the Russian citizen’s
inability to effect changes in his country or on the ambition of revolutionaries and
terrorists, the story presents clearly a single member in a community cutting itself off
from others and attempting to leave them altogether.\(^{35}\) In a somewhat similar vein, the
hero of “A Night” detaches himself from others. Aleksei Petrovich has convinced
himself that he has lived a life of deceit. His only escape from this tormenting
realisation, he believes, is to kill himself. Throughout most of the story -- even when he
encounters other characters -- he is distant, closed in on his thoughts, and lacks hope of
recovery.

The essence of both these heroes’ situations is captured descriptively in two
Soviet readings of the stories. Latynina depicts the setting of “Attalea princeps” as
“образ замкнутого пространства как тюрьмы” and F.I Evnin characterises Aleksei
Petrovich as “эгоцентрически замкнувшийся в своем маленькм «я».”\(^{36}\) The images of
something or someone as closed up or locked off are vividly clear, yet anticipate that
some of the stories’ interaction will take place within these confines. The stories
portray the central characters alone as they encounter, then try to flee, a base world --
the first is a world that physically limits the growth of the palm and the second refers
to the attitude which has directed Aleksei Petrovich’s actions since an early age. Both
stories, commentators rightly have noted, exhibit romantic features as characters seek

\(^{35}\)For comments regarding the story as a revolutionary allegory, see G.A. Bialyi, Vsevolod
Mikhailovich Garshin (Leningrad: Prosveshchenie, 1969), 57.

\(^{36}\)Latynina 110 and Evnin 297.
to assert their individuality.\textsuperscript{37}

Others, too, have taken up the topic of Garshin’s lone characters, yet have shielded this simple fact behind more general discussions. Critics have explained Garshin’s stories by citing them as examples of “Hamletism,” “impressionism” and “pessimism” typical of the era in which he wrote, and there is a measure of truth in such views.\textsuperscript{38} But Garshin’s works go well beyond such -isms, and these critical accounts do not take into account the valuable function isolation plays in them. As an example, consider the observations that Garshin’s contemporary and admirer N.K. Mikhailovskii made of the young writer’s work.

Mikhailovskii notes that Garshin’s stories, in fact, express the necessity and value of having others near, a point that few others have pursued:

Все или почти все произведения г. Гаршина представляют художественный комментарий к великолу в своей простоте: «не добро быть едину». Я бы не сказал, что это корень его пессимизма, но это почва, из которой корень берет нужные ему элементы. Не вообще страданиями занят наш автор; с его точки

\textsuperscript{37}On romantic aspects in Garshin’s writing see Henry, \textit{A Hamlet of His Time}, 88-101; on romantic aspects of “A Tale of Princeps” and “A Night” see 93-99 and 99-101, respectively. See also Latynina 110-120 and V.D. Skvoznikov, “Realizm i romantika v proizvedeniakh Garshina,” \textit{Izvestiia Akademii nauk SSSR. Otdelenie literatury i iazyka} tom XVI, vyp. 3 (May-June 1957), 233-246.

зрения отчего бы и не пострадать, но на людях и с людьми, а не в одиночку.39

Appropriately, the paragraph that these sentences introduce follows up a review of Garshin’s story “A Night,” a story whose ending commends the uninhibited social ways common in childhood relations.40 However, Mikhailovskii does not explore the optimistic aspect of his point — a point so important for its stressing the need for shared experiences — but instead emphasises lone suffering. He focuses on the —пострадать— rather than on the —на людях и с людьми— and continues by summarising the relations that occur in Garshin’s stories as false ones.

Mikhailovskii’s reference in the first passage to Garshin’s pessimism announces the critic’s perspective on Garshin’s writing and directs his reading. And, as if this perspective were the only possible one, it draws him from making other equally valid conclusions about Garshin’s treatment of shared experiences. Despite his reading, there are other points that Mikhailovskii does not consider.

The first point provides some insight on the value Garshin placed on loneness and awareness of one’s community, and inquires into what happens in Garshin’s stories when shared experiences occur. When they are portrayed, such experiences reflect positive situations that are arrived at, rather than natural ways of existence. This


40The story’s ending indirectly led to this article, Mikhailovskii’s second one in a year on Garshin. In the 1885 article, “O Vsevolode Garshine” (see the collection of his writings Literaturno-kriticheskie stat’i, 288-311), Mikhailovskii misread the story’s close and assumed that Aleksei Petrovich had taken his life. Garshin corrected Mikhailovskii.
collective awareness has to be reached, Garshin seems to suggest, from a lesser position, from a struggle or because of a difficulty. Stories such as “A Coward” or “A Night” dwell on the difficulties of experiencing something privately -- and, therefore, alone -- before finally unveiling a positive sign that results directly from, or from a sense of, a more public experience. The experiences both of being near a dying friend and of discussing war are made fuller and more sensible when the acquaintances in “A Coward” come together to support each other or openly to discuss points of contention. In “A Night” Aleksei Petrovich sees life simply and openly only when he looks out, and not when he is acting chiefly for himself. He is given new life, if for an instant, when he realises the value of child-like camaraderie over solitary brooding and self-centred living. In these stories, such positive forms of human experience can only be judged to be positive in the context of trying circumstances: beneficial efforts and hopeful attempts are meaningfully visible only against the often desperate conditions that form the realistic details of the stories’ settings. Mikhailovskii seems to get caught up in this backdrop of desperate conditions -- a convenient tangle for a discussion of pessimism -- for he ignores, or at least glosses over, a paragraph that is central to “A Night” and, arguably, that has meaning for other stories by Garshin that are noteworthy for their focus on lone characters. By overlooking the point of the paragraph, he misses any optimism of that story and, as well, any less obvious optimism that other stories might express. That paragraph appears near the end of the story and clarifies Aleksei Petrovich’s revelation:

-- Страшно; не могу я больше жить за свой собственный страх и счет; нужно, непременно нужно связать с общей жизнью, мучиться и радоваться, ненавидеть и любить не ради своего «я», все пожиращего и ничего взамен не дающего, а ради общей людям правды, которая есть в мире, что бы я там ни кричал, и которая говорит душе, несмотря на все старания заглушить
Aleksei Petrovich sees a new way to live. More importantly though, Garshin uses a situation in which a character is isolated in order to elaborate on the significance of shared experience and community. More than just the condition or setting for the story, isolation becomes a starting point whose constituents affect the outcome of the story. It is only with that moment of being alone that Aleksei Petrovich can see the greater world. And only because of what he encounters in isolation can he come to that conclusion. Not just the character’s thoughts, but as well the character-setting relationship -- how the character interacts with the physical elements of his isolation -- plays a prominent role in Garshin’s portrayal of this lone character.

Mikhailovskii’s second assertion is that Garshin’s characters are alone only on account of their being joined by affected or false ties. Surely Mikhailovskii’s statement generalises character relations from a few stories only -- “An Encounter” and the experiences of “A Night” that explain Aleksei Petrovich’s past, for instance. The heroes of “Four Days,” “Artists,” “Attalea princeps” and “The Red Flower” are made to be alone, but not because their ties to others are insincere. In the four stories, respectively, Ivanov is physically stranded; both Riabinin, who is consumed by his vision, and the palm, as it single-mindedly tries to break free while others passively accept their lot, are psychologically stranded; and the patient in “The Red Flower” is confined and directed by his illness. Quite the contrary to Mikhailovskii’s statements, these characters are alone and isolated because of their very sincere feelings for how they and others relate. Furthermore, while intent on making his argument for

\textsuperscript{41}Garshin, \textit{Sochineniia}, 140. Unless noted, subsequent citations will be made from this edition and will be noted in the text parenthetically.
pessimism, Mikhailovskii misses the thrust of "A Night." The character's "loneliness" is brought about by active choice, not by false ties. Aleksei Petrovich's being alone -- albeit with background noises, a loaded gun, and his thoughts -- is a form of enforced reckoning with himself and with the truth that he discerns. The loneliness Mikhailovskii acknowledges predates the story, and is hardly Garshin's focus; Garshin is much more concerned with the difficulty of self-understanding and the final value that integrity holds for Aleksei Petrovich.

In the stories mentioned above, Garshin presents his characters alone, carefully providing a situation that will cause them to question themselves and to challenge their resourcefulness. Isolation is the setting, the starting point for the movement of the story. Moments alone promote in Garshin's isolated characters the ability to view with clarity the uncontested ideas that govern their actions. Their self-examination comes at a significant time in their lives and reveals their extreme sensitivity to the wanderings of their conscience. All of this takes place over a short period of time under limited and intense conditions, and the narrative tone emphasises the character's immediate reactions to the given situation, further defining the character's singular experiences rather than the situation or the ideas it raises. His approach is structurally linear and clearly distinguishes the constituents of the characters' isolation before portraying how the characters experience the isolation. As a literary device isolation provides Garshin the means to emphasise a character's awareness of himself -- of his acts in the past and potential ones in the future -- and that same character's sense of his being isolated. Perhaps nowhere, though, does Garshin explore this dual emphasis in such detail as he does in two of his most accomplished stories, "Four Days" and "The Red Flower." These stories are workrooms, or laboratories, in the fullest meanings of those words. All
aspects of the setting define carefully designed enclosures that create physical isolation that concentrates the characters' thoughts and actions and so opens them to various potentials. Not simply studies of characters being and acting alone, "Four Days" and "The Red Flower" are sensitively balanced stories in which isolation, in the complete sense of its spiritual, physical and emotional constituents, is the condition that leads the characters -- as far as they are concerned -- to greater realisation and achievement. As the remainder of this chapter will show, the stories portray Garshin’s common concerns of character consciousness and character perspective, but also reveal different, in fact inverted, ways of implementing isolation. In fact, isolation acts as a link that joins other devices and themes. In these two works isolation serves Garshin as a fertile condition for examining such other issues as the difficulty of performing a good act. In "Four Days" this difficulty is portrayed as a topic for mental debate; in "The Red Flower" Garshin activates that debate among two character types.

"Four Days"

"Four Days," Garshin’s first literary success, shows his early concern to portray how individuals respond to trying circumstances. The setting and subject of war give Garshin real situations from which to prompt his hero’s conscience and awareness. While war is the overriding factor that brings about the story’s circumstances, Garshin’s focus is the mental effects war has on the hero when his physical mobility is restricted. Isolation in this context offers the hero the freedom to consider hypothetical action during war-time and forces him to settle with real results.

Garshin set “Four Days” during the Russo-Turkish War. A soldier, Ivanov, is wounded and falls during a skirmish. His company moves ahead without him. He
remains where he fell until he is found four days later, lying in a corner of a field, not far from the man he killed during the brief battle. In the story's opening passage, Ivanov seeks to establish what occurred during those moments of combat that led up to his falling:

The situation in which Ivanov finds himself is apparent. He has moved from the forest into a field and has fallen. His view of the space around him is limited by his inability to maintain consciousness. He has been separated from others in his division and is alone with what nature provides and the battle has left him, as well as with whatever thoughts spring into his mind. These first thoughts recall that all happenings during the skirmish were spontaneous and unpredictable. The minimal descriptions and the pace with which they are recalled comment both on the frenzied moods of fear and uncertainty that mark the characters' expressions, and, subsequently, on the lack of

42Emphasis in the original.
determinacy in the characters' actions in the battle. Ivanov's thoughts indicate, too, that he is a narrator of uncertain trustworthiness about facts (a point I will raise again later) whose account of his opponent, «от страха он не помнил ничего...», expresses presumptive wondering, rather than factual knowledge; yet he is a narrator who creates a vivid sketch of some war-time atrocities. But there is a sense already in this opening that the bigger question of war is not the point of these passages; the point is much more personal.

The narrator's opening words, «Я помню», indicate closure, that the story will reach an end, and that it deserves, or has been asked, to be recalled.\(^{43}\) If the passage grabs the attention of the reader, it does so at the cost of revealing that the wounded soldier survives the four days, at least long enough to record what happened. This bit of news shifts the focus of the remaining story from whether Ivanov can endure, to what, in fact, he alone must endure, to what the situation and his mind deliver over the four days.

The scene achieves much. What interests me most, however, is that the scene emphasises these moments as privately experienced ones. The first-person point of view relays an entirely personal experience in the commonly public arena of war. I do not mean that Ivanov's view of the haphazard responses to battle is, compared to other pictures of battle, a unique one.\(^{44}\) And, certainly, because every thought, reaction and

\(^{43}\) I understand the nature of the story differently from those who see Ivanov recalling the skirmish right after the event, during his first moments of consciousness. See Tumanov for such a reading.

\(^{44}\) Recall the words of Tolstoy's narrator in *War and Peace* as he accounts for Prince Andrei's incertitude at battle time: «Сначала князь Андрей, считая свою обязанностью возбуждать мужество солдат и показывать им пример, прохоживался по рядам; но потом он убедился, что ему нечему и нечем учить их. Все силы его души, точно так же как и каждого солдата, были бессознательно направлены на то, чтобы удержаться только от созерцания...
sensation is filtered through Ivanov’s consciousness, his view becomes more poignant, too. Rather, from Ivanov’s point of view at that moment, the skirmish does not have collective meaning — the shouts of «ypa» are part of the setting. Instead, the skirmish has a private meaning that is locked into Ivanov’s consciousness. His senses, not his patriotic well-being or shared hatred of the enemy, are triggered. He does not assist Sidorov, but perceives him as if he were a branch or bullet. At all times Ivanov is detached from what is happening around him, quite unsure of what to do. This individual description, as Ivanov is overwhelmed by the frenetic mood of the fighting, leads directly to a fuller detailing of Ivanov’s physical detachment from his company. The scene conveys how the mood captures Ivanov and portrays him as a part of the natural whole. The image turns in on itself in the next scene as Ivanov becomes constrained by physical, even natural, limitations, but freed up, as it were, to the activities of his mind. Very quickly Ivanov realises he is physically isolated.

On the second page of the story, Ivanov states openly, «Да, я ранен в бое» (30), expressing his awareness of the situation. His recollections indicate that the wound stopped him where he fell and kept him apart from the others: «все побежали вперед, а я не мог бежать [...] и упал на полянке» (30). His body reacts to the wound in ways beyond Ivanov’s control, bringing him in and out of consciousness, making him aware of, and oblivious to, the world around him: «...вдруг все исчезло; все крики и выстрелы смолкли. Я не слышал ничего, а видел только что-то синее; должно быть, это было небо. Потом оно исчезло» (30). He was wounded in the legs and this wound has debilitated him, he notes later: «Я ползу. Ноги волочатся, ослабевшие ужаса того положения, в котором они были» (Tolstoy 6: 285).
ruki edva dvigayut nepodvizhnoe telo» (34). And the pain the wound causes him restricts his movement almost completely. The pain, Ivanov recounts, «чтото острое и быстрое, как молния, пронизывает все мое тело от колен к груди и голове, и я снова падаю»; it is «как зубная: постоянная, тянущая за душу», «мучительная» (30).

Together, the pain and his efforts to move sap his energy. Eventually, even if he wanted to, he would not move far: «И теперь я лежу здесь только потому, что нет силы оттащиться» (35). His world is limited, as he describes, to «несколько травинок, муравей, ползущий с одной из них вниз головою, какие-то кусочки сора от прошлогодней травы -- вот весь мой мир» (30). There is no suggestion that Ivanov’s pain will subside or that he will gain enough strength to move. He must wait, and, as his observations clearly express, endure his isolation.

Outside his body he notices other factors that will affect his actions and thoughts during this time. At one point Ivanov surveys further how these forces define the limits of his world: «Солнце жжет. Я открываю глаза, вижу те же кусты, то же небо, только при дневном освещении. А вот и мой сосед. Да, это -- турок, труп» (33). Off to his side lies the soldier he killed. His presence is unavoidable: Ivanov smells it, sees it, and is prompted by it to wonder. Nature, too, affects his existence, for it is an active force with which he must reckon: «Мне не хочется открывать глаза, потому что я чувствую сквозь закрытые веки солнечный свет: если я открою глаза, то он будет резать их. Да и лучше не шевелиться» (32). And later, he wonders how the corpse will fare against the sun: «Что сделает с ним солнце сегодня» (37).

Moreover, Ivanov has fallen among bushes that cut off his view, he complains: «О проклятые кусты! Зачем вы обросли вокруг меня таким густым забором? Ничего я не вижу сквозь них» (37). His focus is forced inwards. The expanse of nature
surrounds him, but Ivanov cannot move on it.

Ivanov is sadly aware of his situation and the extent of his isolation. Because of his injuries, he can adapt very little. He cannot overcome the pain, the physical limitations, or the charge of his thoughts. Unlike Crusoe, who expressed his resourcefulness with every difficulty he overcame, and whose past delivered few worries, Ivanov has scant resources, and isolation characterises his physical predicament as well as his inescapable position of accountability before the tribunal of his exacting conscience. Crusoe looks to the future with earnestness while Ivanov sees his present and the hypothetical future clouded by his past choices. Crusoe is too busy establishing a new world; Ivanov has no way to escape the actions of his past one. While Ivanov, to some extent, can control the effects of nature and his pain, as well as his distance from the corpse, he cannot stop his thoughts and the actions of his mind.

As he does in other stories, Garshin presents the conditions for his character's isolation in a linear pattern. While later in the story Garshin will elaborate on some of these conditions, the constituents are outlined in the first third of the story. In addition, in the opening Garshin introduces recollections and spontaneous thoughts, as well as the emotional (and personal) tone common to Ivanov's long sentences, brief exclamations and rhetorical asides that will form the often unpredictable first-person narrative. How the conditions for isolation effect such forms of expression in Ivanov creates the narrative for the remainder of the story, a narrative that focuses on the past as much as on the present.

Although the descriptions suggest Ivanov has only come to be isolated physically

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45On the narrative style see Varnai, Kramer and Tumanov.
from his comrades, as the remainder of the story unfolds, his thoughts and recollections reveal that he has been isolated from the time he chose to join the army. (He was, as he explains, blinded by an idea.46) The thoughts and recollections that return to him during these four days both demand his attention and reveal that when he sought to secure a place in the more public war effort, he did so at the price of locking himself away from others and obscuring his own identity. Over the four days, his struggle for self-understanding -- not for survival -- highlights both the powerfully earnest entreaty that impressions of war can make and the ease with which one can forsake a previous sense of self and other commitments. Isolation effects Ivanov's psychological examination, forcing him to reconsider his acts and wonder about their results.

Considered from this perspective, "Four Days," although it remains a vivid sketch of the horrors of war, becomes more of a detailed description of the lonely relationship between Ivanov (a member of the gentry) and the public and personal concerns of his time. Played out against the opening passages that candidly depict the fragility of human life, his recollections and wonderings question the significance of an individual life to others and to oneself. He wonders not just about how war can claim lives, but also about how he can affect other individuals, and how anyone can affect the outcome of events. These musings are heightened by the reality of the skirmish that surrounds him: his internal world blends with the external one. War is not just the

46The most famous antecedent of such an excuse in war-time storytelling likely appears in Homer's the Iliad. When Agamemnon addresses Achilles and the army, he excuses the losses he may have caused them with the following words: "When tall Hector with that flashing helmet of his/ kept slaughtering Argives pinned against our ships--/ how could I once forget that madness, that frenzy,/ the ruin that blinded me from that first day?/ But since I was blinded and Zeus stole my wits,/ I am intent on setting things to rights, at once:" (Book 19, Lines 159-164). See the Robert Fagles translation (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), 492-493 (emphasis in the translation). It is likely that Garshin had read the Iliad.
backdrop and cause of these thoughts, but symbolises the inner tribulation he undergoes and the unconsidered actions he recalls. He is alone not with the big questions of war, but with questions about his own actions. His points are anti-war insofar as they are "anti-self."

Following the opening passages, Ivanov begins to sort through the thoughts that come to him, beginning an at times painful process of self-examination that will continue to the end of the story ("Как было бы хорошо остановить и работу мозга! Но ее ничем не задержишь. Мысли, воспоминания теснятся в голове." (32)). Ideas filter into his consciousness and the reality of what has happened since he decided to enlist appears to him. The narrative changes from a chronicling to a personal weighing of events. The hasty recollection to this point defines the setting, creates the roots of his self-examination and marks the transition in the story: from recalling the "how" of his actions to seeking clarification of the "why"; from revealing the context to presenting the questions and considering the ramifications of joining the fighting; from setting up the isolation to presenting how his isolation will affect him. The sun, bushes and corpse -- those features that define his physical isolation -- constantly prompt thoughts and recollections that he must endure. These thoughts scrupulously revolve around his recent actions and his reasons for performing them.

A recollection of how a dog was critically injured by a chance incident in a city street, was offered no compassion, and tossed aside to die, prompts Ivanov's musings. He compares himself to the dog and then looks over to the Turkish soldier he killed. His feelings abruptly change from pity for the man to a peculiar form of envy for the dead man's unconsciousness, for his inability to feel. Clearly, Ivanov's consciousness is what troubles him most. And Ivanov supposes being dead to be a form of happiness («Я
Death, Ivanov suggests, frees the Turkish soldier from suffering the consciousness that Ivanov endures. The awareness that he killed the man, that the man is no longer alive because of what he did, stops his flow of thoughts. Only then does he voice the predicament that concerns him for the remainder of the story: the struggle to resolve the disparity between what he intended to do and what he actually did.

He catches sight of the blood-stained hole in the Turkish soldier's uniform and knows that he made it, and what the result of this action was.

[...] Это сделал — я.
Я не хотел этого. Я не хотел зла никому, когда шел драться. Мысль о том, что я придет убивать людей, как-то уходила от меня. Я представил себе только, как я буду подставлять свою грудь под пули. И я пошел и подставил (33).”

The result troubles him. Most particularly Ivanov is caught between the truth of his intentions and that of his actions. Figuratively speaking, he is caught in a “no man's land,” the truth of which he can neither change nor escape. While eventually he will leave his physical isolation, his conscience cannot free him from his past actions. The thoughts that come to Ivanov in this passage hint at the previously unacknowledged fullness of his intentions: that is, the juxtaposition of what he wants, or hopes to do, with what Ivanov actually does. How the two compare and are evaluated promote Ivanov's self-understanding. Garshin uses this juxtaposition to this very end. Still, this distinction is not always easy to make. As Ivanov discovers, a man may not know the consequences of his action while he performs that action. In reflection, alone with his thoughts, he may see the event with fuller clarity.

47 Emphasis in the 1938, 1960 and 1990 editions, but not in the ones published in 1910 or 1939.
At this point, a brief reflection on intention will be instructive. G.E.M. Anscombe, in her pioneering work on the theory of action, proposes that a man, if only aware that he is doing action X, is in fact only doing X, despite the possibility that he is doing Y and Z too.

Since a single action can have many different descriptions, e.g. “sawing a plank”, “sawing oak”, “sawing one of Smith’s planks”, “making a squeaky noise with the saw”, “making a great deal of sawdust” and so on, it is important to notice that a man may know that he is doing a thing under one description, and not under another. Not every case of this is a case of his knowing that he is doing one part of what he is doing and not another (e.g. he knows he is sawing but not that he is making a squeaky noise with the saw). He may know that he is sawing a plank, but not that he is sawing an oak plank or Smith’s plank; but sawing an oak plank or Smith’s plank is not something else that he is doing besides just sawing the plank that he is sawing. For this reason, the statement that a man knows he is doing X does not imply the statement that, concerning anything which is also his doing X, he knows that he is doing that thing. So to say that a man knows he is doing X is to give a description of what he is doing under which he knows it.48

He may, however, with the advantage of hindsight, realise he did Y and Z.49

In “Four Days” the situation is clear. Ivanov did kill the Turkish soldier. When he says that he did not want this («Это сделал я. Я не хотел этого») he is not implying that the killing was unintentional, but that the killing -- and, perhaps, active fighting -- was not his intention for enlisting.50 The stress falls not on the wanting, but


49For more detail see Hacking 235-236.

50Skabichevskii assigns this apparent riddle to the “Hamletism” predominant at that time (Skabichevskii 116-120).
on the "this" [etogo], the killing. He wanted something else, to face bullets alongside others. And he did this, too. In addition, by suggesting that the thought of having to kill people somehow left him, he acknowledges the naturalness of expecting to kill when he joined the army -- that the thought [mysl'] should have been there -- and raises the question, indirectly perhaps, of his responsibility for his action.

In retrospect, Ivanov's real act is something he wanted, yet something undesired, not considered. His action was motivated by an ideal, not by practical knowledge. He can contend with the present circumstances when he justifies his actions and their results in accordance with that ideal, but he also must face the fact that the ideal choice was not free from leading to real, unconsidered consequences. Time indiscriminately delivers this variety of thoughts and possibilities and, as if playing on his sensitivity, causes Ivanov to consider different views of his predicament -- as well-meaning individual, family member, fellow soldier, "commissioned killer." Each label is affixed to a set of beliefs that explains action. And the real event, that cannot be changed, is seen from many assumed perspectives, rather than just the one that caused him to enlist.

For instance, when Ivanov searches for excuses, he can convince himself of both the rightness of his actions and the lack of guilt he should feel for having committed them, as well as the wrongness of his choices and the blame that is his. «Чем же он виноват? И чем виноват я, хотя я и убил его? Чем я виноват?» (34) he asks rhetorically. This "however" [khotia] juxtaposes the fact of being a soldier with that of killing a man, as if in these circumstances they are detachable. Yet Ivanov notes that he killed him. The particular context made a demand of him. It caused him to do things he had no intention to do. Notwithstanding, war offers no middle ground. His
actions are complete, no matter who or what deserves to be blamed. He knows what he did whether he intended to do it or not. That his action was unintentional does not free it from causing immutable repercussions. The presence of the repercussions indicates his being freed from the control of the idea or, in other words, his ability to see more fully the results of his enlisting.

Joining up had earlier consequences, too: it prompted responses from others. Ivanov wonders about how his perspective of his intention and actions corresponds to the perspectives of others, or, to their “descriptions,” to borrow from Anscombe. In fact, as other descriptions will propose, is he a murderer? And, did he, “blinded by his idea,” not the war, cause pain to his mother and Masha?

He or his choice brought about the tears and the efforts of his mother and Masha to dissuade him. After the fact, looking back, he realises that he was responsible for their suffering. He was, as he presents it, overtaken by the idea to the extent that he did not see other descriptions of his potential action. His acquaintances had a valid point: he was going while not knowing [ne znaia] what might come of his action. Only now does he see some of these possibilities. Only now does he suffer because of what his decision and action caused. He lies alone on the field challenged by these thoughts and feelings,

51Emphasis in the original.
without the opportunity to redeem what caused them, and gives signs of feeling responsible for having brought harm to others.

The reactions of his friends suggest Ivanov is acting extraordinarily, perhaps participating in the world differently than usual -- acting in such a way as to provoke unusual responses from them. The "idea" may even have given him a different sense of being. He acted differently, and, apparently, without attention. The "idea" isolated elements of his usual self. He could not act in ways that the "idea" did not propose. His time alone on the field presents forces that cause him to search out that self again and to break the control of this perspective by freeing his consciousness to other perspectives. The physical isolation allows for the possibility of mental de-isolation, of freeing himself of both the control of the idea and the singleness of perspective it produced in him.

The corpse, not his own injured legs, is the most ready reminder of what his decision caused: «Я не могу не думать о нём». Features of his physical isolation continue to bear down on him, prompting reassessment. «Неужели я бросил все милое, дорогое, шел сюда тысячеверстным походом, голодал, холодал, мучился от зноя ...».

And immediately he adds, checking his action as a practical or public, rather than a personal, one: «А ведь разве я сделал что-нибудь полезное для военных целей, кроме этого убийства?» (35). In retrospect, he is unsure of all that he did or whether it was right. With time to reconsider the past, he faces what his family feared, yet what he did not then see. Differently from before, he now takes other reactions into account.

He is now conscious of the views of others and of what he did to them: «Я не понимал (теперь я понял), что я делал с близкими мне существами» (36). In Ivanov’s defence, though, he could not share -- he could not be conscious of -- the perspectives of his
family and friends until acquainting himself with the potential that these perspectives could be realised. Ivanov, the new volunteer, did not know the context and could not have had other intentions.

What he wanted to do and what he did are a thought and an action that can be assigned to specific moments, whereas the results of the intention and action continue to stay with him and to trouble him. He cannot shrug them off, and their staying power suggests that his personal guidelines for actions -- rather than ideal or military ones -- affect him most forcefully. We see his feelings embodied as a debating moral self rather than a selfless agent only when he is free from the control of the idea that caused him to join up and run into battle, only when he is free from that isolating agent. On the other hand, Ivanov realises his self, achieves some self-understanding, some identity -- that is to say, he sees and thinks without being blinded by the idea and its baggage -- when he feels for what he has done and what is around him. He has, to all intents and purposes, worked off the control of the idea to reveal that previous and usual self. The story, though, is held together by Ivanov's constantly realizing his separateness -- by his sense that he was, or is, cut off -- and determining what caused him to be separate. Ivanov keeps sorting through the thoughts that come to him. He endures, but not without effort.

_Mikhailovskii, again_

Mikhailovskii, while warm to the spirit and themes he saw in Garshin's stories, had a problem with Garshin's writing, in part because of Garshin's narrative approaches. The

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52 Hacking, explaining Anscombe, notes that "the intentionality of an action is not a private mental event added on to what is done, but is the doing in context" (Hacking 248).
first-person recollections, diaries and notebooks were of an outmoded style and lacked "выдумка" Mikhailovskii contended.\(^{53}\) Mikhailovskii's protest notwithstanding, Garshin was not trying to enforce the presence of "fictionality" on those stories by removing the possibility of mistaking him for the narrator, a device more common to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century prose. Garshin was, rather, providing as personal an account as possible, letting the character tell his story rather than allowing a narrator to pick and choose to inform at random. Through the singular view, the one perspective of the events, he was providing psychological insights on the repercussions that past choices and actions created in his character. If the subjective tone leads to readers' questions concerning the first-person narrator's factual sincerity, it does so in the shadow of a convincing portrayal of emotions and thoughts.

From the opening of "Four Days" the narrator's story is exceptional, in part because the accuracy and trustworthiness of his voice are controversial. This may be a correct telling by Ivanov, but we do not know if it is a precise recollection. From the start we know that he is recalling, and the closing lines of the story reveal his time of telling. It is immediately after he wakes from his operation.

Я очнулся в дивизионном лазарете. Надо мною стоят доктора, сестры милосердия, и, кроме них, я вижу еще знакомое лицо знаменитого петербургского профессора, наклонившегося над моими ногами. Его руки в крови. Он возвышается у моих ног недолго и обращается ко мне:

-- Ну, счастлив ваш бог, молодой человек! Живы будете. Одну ножку-то мы от вас взяли; ну, да ведь это -- пустяки. Можете вы говорить?

Я могу говорить и рассказывать им все, что здесь написано (40).

The story should cause us to marvel at his eye for detail, his ability to remember the struggle with his conscience and the changing natural forces delivered by time. From

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where, after four days of seeming torment followed by a major operation, does he acquire the wherewithal to tell his story accurately? On one hand there is no one to endorse his accuracy. On the other, he paints a fairly horrid, yet brave picture. The truth we have is not the truth of the four days, but the truth of his retelling, of the story that he relates to the medical staff once they have operated on him, the truth of his own story. It is gripping enough that we give ourselves up to him, despite not being sure of what he does not or cannot tell, not to mention what he misrepresents. There are grounds to be sceptical, but also there is candid evenness and fairness to his arguments; it is not difficult to be willingly locked into his focus. His choices, he admits, are not always right ones and he does not merely justify his actions. He sees his own wrongs and misunderstanding when he considers the actions from other standpoints and with the advantage of hindsight. But he also reveals how his decisions could seem just or noble at the anxious moment they were made, as well as how he may not have known their full consequence. In Ivanov’s mind various “right” actions appear against his awareness that he could follow only one “right” path. These debates express a truism: To ask what might be the right choice to make during war-time is to reveal that there is no fully satisfactory answer. The first-person point of view reveals how the situation limits and challenges Ivanov -- the events that led up to it cannot be changed; it shows how the space around him is minimised while expression of his inner development is maximised.

When Mikhailovskii discussed Garshin’s lack of innovation, he could have made the case that Garshin was still drawing on traditional divisions to fill out his narrative, placing good opposite evil, a thoughtful attitude (when Ivanov is isolated) opposite an emotional one (when Ivanov runs with his idea, blind to others’ objections). This
observation would have undermined arguments in Mikhailovskii's own populist writings, but would have been a more accurate criticism of Garshin's work. In "Four Days," what Garshin offers to the tradition, however, is a portrayal of these conventions in one character, a character who becomes sensitive to the fullness of his actions, yet a portrayal directed more at defining the process of this awareness than such "grander" ideas as repentance or revelation. Moreover, with this early literary success Garshin employs a small stock of devices and themes that he would draw from in later stories, creating a tradition of sorts of his own. Garshin would rework the opposition of a character overtaken by an idea versus a character who sees the many-sided nature of an issue. He would juxtapose intentions to actions, use visual prompts to activate a character's conscience, contrast mental independence to physical freedom, express through his characters the difficulty of goodness. Isolation is an important device among these: it is the structural and conceptual foundation that unites the other devices and themes. Physical isolation is the starting point for the story; public awareness is broadened through solitary wondering in limited and intense conditions; lone thinking reveals a hypersensitive individual who relies on his conscience for direction.

For the final part of this chapter I will explore how isolation and the few other devices serve Garshin in "The Red Flower." Despite the consistencies in "Four Days" and "The Red Flower," Garshin captures the particular awareness of each story's hero. Those awarenesses are distinguished by how the characters experience their isolation.

"The Red Flower"

With "The Red Flower" Garshin reworks the physical isolation-mental isolation pairing.
There are at least three ways that the story’s protagonist, an asylum patient, is isolated: by his illness, by the limitations of the asylum, and by a necessary task that claims his consciousness. While the patient is rarely freed from the controlling idea brought on by his sickness, his physical containment is something he can manipulate and manage.

Garshin portrays a patient who has been brought to an asylum to be treated for his nervous attack. The third-person narrator describes the patient’s interaction with the asylum and details, particularly, the patient’s reaction to something he finds in the asylum yard. The patient sees three poppies in the yard and believes that they store evil. He sets himself the task of picking the flowers and, thus, destroying evil. His efforts drain his emotional and physical energy while simultaneously bringing him a sense of achievement. He realises his goal and dies.

Part way through the story, the hero’s attempt to pluck the flower is frustrated by an old Ukrainian watchman. It is a telling moment for it distinguishes the characters’ perceptions of the flower and their perspectives for the necessity of their actions.

И он сошел с крыльца. Осмотревшись и не заметив сторожа, стоявшего сзади него, он перешагнул грядку и протянул руку к цветку, но не решился сорвать его. Он почувствовал жар и колотье в протянутой руке, а потом и во всем теле, как будто бы какой-то сильный ток неизвестной ему силы исходил от красных лепестков и пронизывал все его тело. Он приподнялся ближе и протянул руку к самому цветку, но цветок, как ему казалось, защищался, испуская ядовитое, смертельное дыхание. Голова его закружилась; он сделал последнее отчаянное усилие и уже схватился за стебелек, как вдруг тяжелая рука легла ему на плечо. Это сторож схватил его.

-- Нельзя рвать, -- сказал старик-хозяин. -- И на грядку не ходи. Тут много вас, сумасшедших, найдется: каждый по цветку, весь сад разнесут, -- убедительно сказал он, все держа его за плечо.

Больной посмотрел ему в лицо, молча освободился от его руки и в волнении пошел по дорожке. «О, несчастные! -- думал он. -- Вы не видите, вы ослепли до такой степени, что защищаете его. Но во что бы то ни стало я покончу с ним. Не сегодня, так завтра мы померяемся силами. И если я погибну, не все ли равно ...» (231).
The flower is no longer solely a lone plant or part of the garden: each character gives it special significance and sees the consequence of this plucking as a different result. To the watchman, who hopes to maintain order in the hospital yard, the flower is to be protected from being picked by the patients. To the patient the flower is a storehouse of evil that must be destroyed. Both characters see the flower, but see it differently. They assign it significance based on their definition of the context around them and on how they project their role in that space. They articulate these perspectives based on their own experiences and understand responsibility in their own ways. More generally, they see each other's intentions and actions according to their own understandings, not as the other sees them. The story grows out of the tension brought on by the difference of awareness between the patient and others, and, consequently, the different senses of responsible activity directed by each character's conscience.

As with Ivanov, the patient's compelling awareness derives from circumstances that pre-date the story. Throughout “The Red Flower,” aspects of the patient's past filter through to explain his actions and to justify his being placed in the asylum. In the story's opening the extremely agitated state of his most recent past is described by implication. The narrator reveals how the patient's actions affect others:

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As part of his discussion on action theory, van Dijk offers the following observation concerning cause: “The event brought about by a causing event will be called a consequence, and the final state of a consequence a result” (van Dijk 278 -- his emphasis).
The patient’s nervous state changes, this passage explains, through varying degrees of severity and, thus, in and out of what might be considered a “usual” form of existence.

In Parts Two and Four of the story (it has six parts), still another being is revealed:

Он очнулся ночью. Все было тихо; [...] 
-- Где я? Что со мной? -- пришло ему в голову. И вдруг с необыкновенною яркостью ему представился последний месяц его жизни, и он понял, что он болен и чем болен. Ряд нелепых мыслей, слов и поступков вспомнился ему, заставляя содрогаться всем существом. 
-- Но это кончено, слава богу, это кончено! -- прошептал он и снова уснул. [...] 
[...] теперь в нем не было ничего безумного. Это был глубокий, тяжелый сон измученного человека, без сновидений, без малейшего движения и почти без дыхания. На несколько мгновений он проснулся в полной памяти, как будто бы здоровым, чтобы утром встать с постели прежним безумцем (225-226).

Он сознавал, что он в сумасшедшем доме; он сознавал даже, что он болен. Иногда, как в первую ночь, он просыпался среди тишины после целого дня буйного движения, чувствуя ломоту во всех членах и страшную тяжесть в голове, но в полном сознании. Может быть, отсутствие впечатлений в ночной тишине и полусвете, может быть, слабая работа мозга только что проснувшегося человека делали то, что в такие минуты он ясно понимал свое положение и был как будто бы здоров. Но наступал день; вместе со светом и пробуждением жизни в больнице его снова волной охватывали впечатления; больной мозг не мог справиться с ними, и он снова был безумным (228-229).

His memory shows to him that he has been unwell for the past month, not just for the duration of the train ride. The patient has another existence outside the personality that his sickness imposes on him. But the conditions of his sickness are such that he cannot control what state his senses take. While he may feel that the sickness has passed, the narrator knows better that the patient will wake and still be ill. Like the "idea" that drove Ivanov to join up, the illness, not the patient himself, cuts him off from that past existence by isolating aspects of his usual self. The illness, too, leads to his being brought to the asylum, a setting with conditions of its own, and to his being
overtaken by an idea that directs his conscious actions.

The asylum maintains a controlled atmosphere with the help of its imposing physical structure and the attentive monitoring of its staff. As the following descriptions imply, the asylum was built to keep patients restrained and away from the outside world. These same features set some of the conditions that the patient must overcome if he hopes to escape his physical isolation and achieve his goal. The narrator provides a measured, objective account of the structure and its spaces.

And within these walls, the asylum staff looks after the patients, in essence, controlling the lives of the patients.

The internal framework of the asylum also dictates the freedom of the hero. Regulations require registration, bathing, organised meals, no picking flowers, division of rooms, and the authority of the staff. The staff of the asylum assumes knowledge of what is in the best interest of the patient and, thus, assumes responsibility; but, they appear less as individuals and more as aspects of the institution. As the old Ukrainian exercises his authority in the yard, so, too, the doctor is an authority -- on individual well-being. The doctor observes and orders.55 Ideally the staff seeks unquestioning
obedience to the conditions of confinement. Their job is most physically demanding when they have to keep the patients from harming themselves. Thus, the patient is isolated from the outside world, and the hierarchical structure of the hospital keeps him separate from the staff. Physically, then, the patient is locked into this place and subject directly to its sense of what is right and what is good. This is the situation as presented by the narrator, who only occasionally reveals the patient’s thoughts. But the patient has a somewhat different understanding of his situation, at least of his situation before he first sees the flower.

At his first meeting with the doctor, the patient makes a bold statement about his living outside time and space. The patient refers to having a grand idea, a common idea [velikaia ideia, obshchaia ideia] in his soul (227). He further elaborates on the power of this idea and the significance of his having it:

Я достиг реально того, что выработано философией. Я переживаю самим собою великие идеи о том, что пространство и время -- суть фикции. Я живу во всех веках. Я живу без пространства, везде и нигде, как хотите. И поэтому мне все равно, держите ли вы меня здесь или отпустите на волю, свободен я или связан (227).

The patient is unaware that his words comment directly on his state. His conscious activities of his usual (healthy) life stopped when he became sick and they will restart

{Also, the commonness of the supervisor’s name (Nikolai Nikolaich) questions any individuality that he may represent. Alternatively, Peter Henry singles out the supervisor, Nikolai Nikolaich, offering that he is the one “who exhibits an unforced, humane attitude to the Patient, and is therefore the only person to be named” (Henry, A Hamlet of his Time, 159 or Henry, “Image and Symbol in Garshin’s ‘The Red Flower,’” Essays in Poetics vol. 7, no. 1 (April 1982), 19 [The latter appears to be an earlier version of pages 146-169 in A Hamlet of his Time.]). Henry, I think, is making much of a short exchange between the two characters. During their chat the patient asks if he can sit down to eat and the supervisor [nadziratel’] ensures he receives dinner. After supper, he warns the patient not to overeat, and then listens to the patient’s excuse for needing so much food, and offers a smile of understanding (232-233). In fact, though, as the supervisor smiles, listens and comments, so, too, does the doctor, and, as well, the clerk, at the beginning of the story. Each man smiles and listens to the words of the patient. Are not they all exhibiting an unforced, humane attitude?}
only when he is well again. In the mean time, he is outside the time and space of that usual consciousness. While he can recall the time of his sickness in his more lucid moments -- when he is «в полной памяти» (226) -- clear images of his healthy existence escape him when he is sick. When he is ill, he sees only familiar features [znakomye cherty (229)] of that past. More importantly, though, the quote explains that he possesses an image in his mind that directs his actions. It is an image that he cannot name, but that he can describe. It affects a man’s soul, he had mentioned earlier, and is the topic of philosophical discussion. He sees himself as filled with a clear image of goodness, as filled with a particular vision that cannot be assigned to material coordinates. Despite the obvious outer constraints on his movement, he enjoys an inner freedom that denies the outer isolation.

Before accepting any of the oppositions as resolved, however, consider the story’s opening scene as a comment on goodness, rather than as a dramatic introduction of the story’s players and setting. Almost directly it suggests itself as a scientific case study, defining the extensive efforts made to contain, retrieve and isolate the patient.

Писарь больницы, записывавший больного в большую истерзанную книгу на залитом чернилами столе, не удержался от улыбки. Но двое молодых людей, сопровождавшие больного, не смеялись: они едва держались на ногах после двух суток, проведенных без сна, наедине с безумным, которого они только что привезли по железной дороге. На предпоследней станции припадок бешенства усилился; где-то достали сумасшедшую рубаху и, позвав кондуктора и жандарма, натели на больного. Так привезли его в город, так доставили и в больницу (222).

56Borrowing, perhaps, from this story, M.M. Latkina used the same words to describe Garshin’s state after the Mlodetskii affair in February 1880. «Но эта попытка истощила его силы. Чаша страдания переполнилась; нервы не выдержали непосильного напряжения, и снова граница между действительностью и грезой пропала: он снова ушел в мир без времени и пространства. Вторично наступило безумие». Cited in Durylin 608 -- my italics. Durylin quotes from Latkina’s entry in the commemorative edition «Памяти Гаршина» (1889).
He has been brought back for observation and care, for observation not solely by the asylum staff, but by the reader, too. In this expressive passage there is a quiet announcement of ideas that shape the story. The narrator's rendering of the two escorts who accompanied the patient to the asylum is not merely a comment on how extreme the patient's actions were or how the escorts' energies and resourcefulness were challenged. The summary of the train trip is very much a positive remark on the apparent selfless caring that the two showed for the patient. The two escorts risked their own welfare to return the patient safely, making their task less a simple or routine duty and more of the magnitude of exploit or feat. With the advantage of hindsight, then, the opening appears fuller. It introduces the characters and setting, but the characters -- the patient and the staff -- appear as two embodiments of active and selfless goodness, and the isolation emerges as a containment for the further exploration of what might comprise a great feat and selfless caring.

Certainly, too, the opening emphasises the divergent awarenesses that govern the actions of the patient, on one hand, and the asylum staff, on the other. For the remainder of the story the patient and the staff function on different conceptual paths. That they cannot see the same world similarly will eventually lead to their believing that only they can look after the other. The point is, though, that they make the other's task more difficult. With this sleight of hand, Garshin puts goodness at odds with itself.

That a good action cannot clearly be established joins this story to "Four Days." And, like in "Four Days," in "The Red Flower" Garshin presents an emotional attitude and a thoughtful one, and also places what appear to the characters as right actions opposite wrong ones, a comparison similar to the good-evil juxtaposition of the earlier
story. He outlines the limits of physical freedom and offers an example of inner and, perhaps, mental freedom. All these features that define the story so far are about to be tested and Garshin marks the transition clearly.

At the end of the third part of the story the patient sights the poppy, the «необыкновенно яркий альный цветок, один из видов мака» (228). The significance the flower holds for the patient is not explained in this passage, but is relayed through the immediate effects it has on the patient. At the first sighting, a doctor's assistant [fel'dsher] approaches the patient to take him to be weighed. As the patient turns toward the assistant, the assistant «чуть не отшатнулся в испуге: столько дикой злобы и ненависти горело в безумных глазах» (228). The patient's expression betrays the feelings that have accumulated in him because of this sighting.

The change in the patient's manner shifts the narrative from the patient and routine of the asylum to the patient and the flower. No longer merely "in" the asylum, he now has a focus that claims his thoughts and actions; he is no longer a passive recipient of the conditions of the asylum, but becomes an active agent working against these conditions.

When he sees the flower for the second time he is wearing a cap that he, like all the other patients, has been issued. The knitted caps, leftovers from the war that were bought at an auction, have a red cross on the front in which the patient recognises particular significance («Но больной, само собою разумеется, придавал этому красному кресту особое, таинственное значение» (230).). He compares the brightness of this symbol to that of the flowers to measure the strength of each force:

От снял с себя колпак и посмотрел на крест, потом на цветы мака. Цветы были ярче.
-- Он побеждает, -- сказал больной, -- но мы посмотрим (230-231).
The lack of balance between the "two reds" -- between the "good" of the cross and the "evil" of the flower -- announces a predicament to the patient. And with the claim "we’ll see" [my posmotrim], the patient implies that he will resolve the discrepancy, marking this part of the narrative as the beginning of the story's resolution -- the beginning of the patient's efforts to overcome this imbalance: how he picks the flowers and manages his isolation in order to do so.\textsuperscript{57}

The tension between the two worlds, between that which confines the patient and that which defines his success, grows as the quest progresses through its planning stages. Those moments when he breaks away from his confinement to claim the flower create climactic scenes. In such scenes, tension builds, raising the character's emotional level to an extreme and accentuating his need to fulfil his goal.

Shortly after the patient compares the red of the flower to that of the cross on his cap, he takes an opportunity and plucks the first flower.

Он почти забыл о цветке, но, уходя из сада и поднимаясь на крыльце, снова увидел в густой потемневшей и уже начинающейся траве точно два красных уголка. Тогда больной отстал от толпы и, став позади сторожа, выждал удобного мгновения. Никто не видел, как он перескочил через грядку, схватил цветок и торопливо спрятал его на своей груди под рубашкой. Когда свежие, росистые листья коснулись его тела, он побледнел, как смерть, и в ужасе широко раскрыл глаза. Холодный пот выступил у него на лбу (231-232).

The patient believes that, in order to overcome and remove the strength of the flower (and, thus, overcome the imbalance), his body must absorb the flower's evil.

Цветок в его глазах осуществлял собою все зло; он впитал в себя всю невинно пролитую кровь (оттого он и был так красен), все слезы, всю желчь человечества. [...] Он надеялся, что к утру цветок потеряет всю свою силу. Его зло перейдет в его грудь, его душу, и там будет побеждено или победит -- тогда сам он погибнет, умрет, но умрет, как честный боец и как первый боец

\textsuperscript{57}See van Dijk 290.
To the patient there is an active battle between him and the flower, a battle that directly affects both of them. The further the patient pursues the flower, the more he gives up of himself.

The patient is restricted by his context and gives himself up to his idea. He takes part in two relationships and two levels of interaction: the institution guards him, and he seeks the flower -- he is controlled from the outside and guided by his vision. He can negotiate the physical limitations, but cannot change how his vision directs his actions. This framework restricts or permits the patient to fulfil the objective he sets for himself. The active plot of the story's second half -- the patient versus the flower -- functions within this tension. In addition, though, for the patient, there is another form of tension; the duty of having to rid the world of the symbol of evil brings with it distinct baggage. His constant fear that the flower will win out makes him determined to eliminate the flower. Since his arrival at the asylum, he has understood various usual actions of the asylum staff as potential abuse. But this fear subsides when he, who at times fears he is being shadowed, must become a hunter. Less obvious baggage emerges from his sense of his moral responsibility. When he realises his calling to save others from the flower, he fears that he will not fulfil his mission, placing not only this pressure on himself, but also accepting responsibility for the problems that may arise from his failure, most obviously the suffering of others. The narrator articulates this obligation after the patient plucks the first flower:
Whether he takes on the task to keep others from being tempted by the flower or to stop the flower from actively spreading evil in the future, his concern is the welfare of others. Accomplishing this means acting outside the regulations of the hospital.

The narrator never forgets that the power of the flower is only apparent to the patient: "И он лежал, изнемогая в призрачной, несуществующей борьбе, но все-таки изнемогая" (234). The narrator reports, too, on the concern of the asylum staff for the patient's health:

Его не пустили в сад; доктор, видя, что вес его уменьшается, а он все не спит и все ходит и ходит, приказал впрыснуть ему под кожу большую дозу морфия. Он не сопротивлялся: к счастью, в это время его безумные мысли как-то совпали с этой операцией. Он скоро заснул (234).

The point when the patient first spots the flower (end of Part Three (228)) is a turning point also for the hospital staff. Every day following that weigh-in, the doctor's assistant notes that the patient has lost more weight. His constant agitation and weight loss attract closer attention from the staff. Throughout Part Five, the narrator balances carefully both campaigns and seemingly draws attention to how quickly the patient's challenge increases in difficulty. Each time the patient tries to overcome the limits placed on his freedom the staff tries to restrain him for fear of his declining health.

In a last effort to save the patient, the staff straps him to his bed and has someone sleep near him to monitor his movements. With extraordinary strength and dexterity he frees himself, locates the last flower, plucks it, returns to his room with the flower in his hands, and dies peacefully, believing he has saved all others. He overcomes his physical constraints to carry out the necessary act brought on by his illness.
On Madness

In Gogol's "Diary of a Madman," a precursor to Garshin's "The Red Flower," we learn first and foremost what Poprishchin wants, sees, thinks, creates and feels. His diary is a record of his responses to the world and a reflection of his ability to express himself. It is a private form of expression that is not subject to others' criticism. It is a storehouse and testing ground for ideas and plans. It is a safe house where he is always in charge. In that narrative there is no measured sense of what really occurs in Poprishchin's physical world. There is no reasoned consideration of what might provoke others' actions. We have only his record, affected as it is by his imaginary world. Unlike this view of a man with unreasonable tendencies, a view limited to Poprishchin's perspective and how his madness affects this perspective, "The Red Flower" displays the various views of the patient and the staff. The later story portrays the manifest understandings of what both groups understand as just and good actions, understandings that constantly appear to be at cross-purposes. Its narrator is as concerned to reveal the fullness of the asylum situation that involves the patient as to relate the awareness of the patient. The more rounded view of the asylum staff's inability to control the patient puts into relief the significance of the patient's actions without discounting the sincerity and extent of the staff's efforts. Unlike the voice behind Gogol's story, this narrator sees the physical world objectively, describing the staff's efforts simply and the patient's responses sympathetically.

"Things" seem a certain way to the patient, the narrator tells us. The patient is separate not only from his usual self; as well, his sensibilities differ from those of others. Recall the narrator's description:

Он почувствовал жар и колотье в пропитанной руке, а потом и во всем теле,
The use of the verb “seemed” [(po)kazalos’] and occasional comparisons at other places in the story that the narrator makes between what the patient does with what a healthy person [zdorovy] might do underscore the patient’s particular interaction with the flowers. Recall also that the patient realises the difference and explains it as the inability of others to see: «Вы не видите, вы ослеплены до такой степени, что защищаете его» (231). Later, he repeats these observations: «Они не видели его. Я увидел» (234). This is not a complaint; rather, it is an expression of sadness and an announcement of duty. It “seems” to him, not only that the flower stores evil, but also that others do not recognise this fact. Lastly, recall the narrator’s description of how, when the patient sights the flower for the second time, the patient’s attention is captured by the red cross on his cap, «Но больной, само собою разумеется, придавал этому красному кресту особое, таинственное значение» (230), and the narrator’s clear awareness that the significance of the flower is only apparent to the patient, «И он лежал, изнемогая в призрачной, несуществующей борьбе, но все-таки изнемогая» (234). The narrator openly acknowledges the patient’s particular view, gently implying its imaginary nature but not discounting the likelihood that the understanding is a real one for the patient.

The narrator appreciates that the patient’s relationship with the flower comes from an internally and individually determined necessity. For the patient, as the
reflecting subject, this possible world is an actual existence. There is no reason to think that for the patient the qualities he assigns to the flower do not exist. He still possesses a facility for reason that is confirmed by how he carefully attends to his plans and by how he logically discriminates his priorities. On the other hand, the patient assigns characteristics to the flower which are reasonably implausible, at least for those outside his domain. But he acts on the basis of this relationship. He is driven by his personal vision, his idea, and the relationship is a stable one; the intent of the patient never changes -- his emotions toward his duty are altered only when difficulty arises, but his passion toward the flower does not sway.

The narrator offers the worries of the patient as well as those of the staff and chronicles similarly their difficulties and successes. The paradox of their interaction, as I mentioned in my opening remarks on this story, arises from these characters' inability to work together. They function on different conceptual paths and have contesting senses of how, for the sake of the other, they must act responsibly. This is so chiefly because they assign their own understandings to the actions and intentions of the other. Because they cannot share their understandings, they are, in effect, cut off from the other.

But Garshin works through various additional forms of isolation in this story.

58 To quote Anthony Storr, "The subjective can be so over-emphasized that the individual's inner world becomes entirely divorced from reality. In that case we call him mad" (Storr 72).


60 His focus sways from the flower at two times in the story: when his excitement anticipates the outcome of his act and this joy overrides the task at hand (231), and when a morphine treatment overtakes his senses (234).
To repeat briefly, the patient's temporary sickness divides him from his usual self mentally; the asylum's physical structure cuts him off from the outside, and its hierarchical structure separates him from the asylum staff; the idea prompted by the flower takes him away from the inner freedom of which he initially boasted to the doctor. Attached closely to each form are the other devices and themes Garshin had used and raised in "Four Days." We see a character who is overcome by an idea opposed to a thoughtful character. The patient's lucid moments contrast the emotional ones. As well, the reasoned, even scientific, approach of the staff contrasts the patient's frenzied efforts to capture the flower in the second half of the story. We see how the staff's and patient's inability to understand the other's intentions and actions motivates the climactic scenes in the story. We see at the midway point of the story how the patient is overwhelmed by the demands of his conscience when he first sights the red flowers. We see the patient in moments of inner freedom and physical contentment, mental obsession and physical constraint. We see acts of apparent goodness as simultaneously reckless and caring, selfless and wondrous, but at odds with other such acts. And, as we did in "Four Days," in "The Red Flower" we see these devices as measures.

These devices serve Garshin in both stories as means to create a sense of balance or relative proportion. Much of the point of "Four Days" consists in Ivanov's obligation and ability to work through his thoughts and actions. He alone is able to determine what he did and to realise that he did some things he had not expected to do. He is not only a selfless agent to an idea, but is also a debating moral self in tune with his senses. In isolation he is able to evaluate and to reflect for he is aware of the relative nature of his thoughts and actions. This is not the case with the patient in "The Red Flower." If "The Red Flower" was a first-person narrative like "Four Days," the truth of its telling
might very well resemble Poprishchin's. In the later story Garshin employs a third-person narrator who sees the relative nature of the patient's actions and who captures the cause-and-effect scenarios that propel the story to its end. The patient's tendency to consider all actions with a sense of urgency and to see each outcome as potentially life-changing condition his unflinching view but also convey the limitations of his awareness. Devices that reveal how Ivanov mentally works through the thoughts that come to him in isolation reveal in "The Red Flower" how the patient physically and instantly responds to his situation. Garshin needs both the staff and the third-person narrator to maintain the relative proportion of the story.

In comparison with other Garshin isolation stories, "Four Days" and "The Red Flower" share common points. They explore intimate responses that lone characters have to the limited and limiting world around them. By reducing the setting and limiting the scope in which a character can act, Garshin forces the character to deal with the conditions that that space delivers, but also emphasises the character's responses to that reduced world and the thoughts that come to him. In addition, Garshin's writings underscore the value of experiences that are attentive to the needs of a larger community. The stimuli that characters encounter in isolation remind them of what they do not have or of what others cannot do. They cause the characters to weigh their actions and to wonder about the welfare of others. The isolated character may be alone, but, for Garshin, he is never without thoughts of others.

Before he depicts his heroes' thoughts, perceptions, and actions in isolation, Garshin presents the fact of isolation, laying out the various forces that will direct the characters for the remainder of the story. The isolation act receives brief mention and, as in "Four Days" and "The Red Flower," often predates the story time. Although
Garshin employs recollections and flashbacks, and occasionally the narratives diverge from a direct chronological representation (as in "A Night" or in the alternating first-person narratives of "An Incident" and "Artists"), he presents the situation first and the dealing with it later. This linear, structural approach continues the conventions common in Russian short stories to that time. Garshin moves away from this tradition when he uses the short story to represent momentary moods and feelings of intensity and excitement, when he uses the short story to reveal the characters as gauges of how the moment affects them, rather than, say, as ideological perspectives or the accumulation of life experiences. In "Four Days" and "The Red Flower," with a small stock of devices that draw on isolation as a starting-point, Garshin devotes these moments to providing balanced accounts of how characters view the rightness of their actions, in the earlier story portraying a search for self-understanding, in the later one depicting selfless commitment to an idea.

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61 For further discussion of such a distinction and how it relates to Tolstoy's and Dostoevsky's heroes, see Caryl Emerson's article "The Tolstoy Connection in Bakhtin," 166-167.
Four: Chekhov and Isolation as Typical Occurrence

Biographical Sketch

In 1877 Chekhov started to send short prose as well as verse and dramatic works to such weekly magazines as The Dragonfly [Стрекоза] and The Alarm Clock [Вудильник].¹ These early efforts were rejected but, until Chekhov moved from Taganrog to Moscow in 1879 to begin his studies at the University’s medical school, he continued to post his writings to his eldest brother Aleksandr, who would circulate them among journals and his Moscow University contacts. Aleksandr and Nikolai (Kolia), Chekhov’s other older brother, had moved to Moscow in the summer of 1875 to further their studies. They were the first of their immediate family to leave Taganrog, the Chekhov children’s birthplace. By late 1876 all the immediate family but Chekhov had relocated in Moscow, in part to save themselves from creditors pursuing Chekhov’s father, and in part to save themselves from poverty. Chekhov remained on his own until August 1879.

In mid-January 1880 The Dragonfly accepted Chekhov’s short story, “A Letter to a Learned Neighbour” [Письмо к ученому соседу].² Chekhov signed his first publication with four dots followed by the last letters of his name [. . . .]. From the time of this publication almost four years passed (1883) before Chekhov signed his real


²The Dragonfly 10 (9 March 1880), 6. The story originally appeared as “A Letter of Stepan Vladimirovich N., a Don Landowner, to Doctor Friedrich, a Learned Neighbour” [Письмо донского помещика Степана Владимировича Н к ученому соседу д-ру Фридриху].
name (as A. Chekhov) to a publication. During these first three years, his approximately 120 works most often appeared in the humour magazines *The Spectator* [Зритель], *Talk of the World* [Мирской толк], *Fragments* [Осколки], *The Alarm Clock* and *The Dragonfly*, and usually were assigned to one of several pseudonyms, of which Antosha Chekhonte (and its variants Antosha Ch. and A. Chekhonte) and The Man Without Spleen [Человек без селезенки] (and its abbreviation) were the most popular.

Near the end of 1882 Chekhov began to submit stories regularly to Nikolai Aleksandrovich Leikin (1841-1906), a prolific writer and, more importantly for Chekhov, the editor of the Petersburg weekly, *Fragments*. Leikin offered Chekhov a bit more money than did most other magazines, 8 kopecks a line, and sought exclusive rights to Chekhov's work, something the young writer was unwilling to relinquish. With rigid editorial practices that stressed brevity (works were to be no longer than 1000 words) and the meeting of deadlines, Leikin influenced Chekhov's artistic output,

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3 The work was a story, "He Understood!" [Он понял!], and appeared in the journal *Nature and Hunting* [Природа и охота] 11, vol. IV (1883), 75-84.

4 Other magazines included *The Minute* [Минута], *Moscow* [Москва], *The Fellow-traveller* [Спутник] and *Light and Shadows* [Свет и тени].

5 Chekhov's first story to appear in *Fragments* was "Ran Up Against Trouble" [Нарвался] *Fragments* №47 (20 November 1882), 4.

6 Rayfield indicates that *The Spectator* also paid Chekhov 8 kopecks a line (Rayfield, *Anton Chekhov*, 92). Usual pay at these magazines, notes Mikhail Gromov, was 5-7 kopecks a line (*Chekhov*, (Moskva: Molodaia gvardiia, 1993), 123); *The Dragonfly* and *The Alarm Clock* were paying Chekhov 5 kopecks a line (Gromov 121).

7 In *Chekhov: A Biography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990/1988), V.S. Pritchett marks this decision as a sign of Chekhov's lifelong independence: "Chekhov refused to be tied to the new editor, and indeed all his life Chekhov refused to bind himself" (20). A few lines earlier Pritchett offers misinformation, writing that Leikin offered Chekhov 8 rubles a line.
compelling Chekhov to adhere to the requirements of *Fragments*. Most notably Chekhov followed the prose form Leikin himself commonly employed through the late 1870s and 1880s, the *stsenka*, an objective, yet humorous, “little scene” whose focus and humour derive from its characters’ dialogue. They are situational pieces, hardly dependent on story, that end when the dialogue breaks off. Despite such formal guidelines, Chekhov created lasting works, among which “The Fat Man and the Thin Man” [*Толстый и тонкий* 1883] and “The Chameleon” [*Хамелеон* 1884] deserve mention. Although Chekhov held closely to Leikin’s 1000-word ceiling, he was not apprehensive to test various narrative approaches. In April and May of 1883, for instance, Chekhov published four stories that reflect his experimenting with point-of-view and first-person narrators. By 1885, in part thanks to Leikin, Chekhov was moving away from *Fragments*, gaining the attention of the distinguished daily, *Petersburg News* [*Петербургская газета*], and was markedly modifying Leikin’s model, bringing to the *stsenka* such features as heightened atmosphere and psychological depth, traits that distinguish “The Malefactor” [*Элоумышленник*] and “Sergeant

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8In her *Chekhov: A Study of the Major Stories and Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) Beverly Hahn provides a sensitive reading of the more accomplished stories Chekhov wrote between 1880 and 1885 (39-51).


10The stories first appeared *Fragments* № 40 (1 October 1883), 5 and № 36 (8 September 1884), 4, respectively.

11See “The Thief” [Вор], “Twenty-six” [Двадцать шесть], “My Nana” [Моя Нана] and “Appetizer” [Закуска], all of which appeared in *Fragments*. “The Thief,” the *PSSP* editors remind us, is “the first story [by Chekhov] where conditions are reflected through the perception of the hero” (Chekhov, *Sochinenia*, 2: 500). “Twenty-six” is subtitled “excerpts from a dictionary,” “My Nana” is a first person account that includes a letter as text and reported speech, and “Appetizer” is a first person recollection (a “pleasant” one according to the subtitle).
Through the mid-1880s Chekhov continued to write and publish at a rapid pace. In 1884 Chekhov published no less than 70 works, and in 1885 and 1886 he published over a hundred each year. In today’s measures the output of these years amounts to some 1300 pages (three volumes). The work is of varying quality; the speed with which the stories were produced seems to anticipate such a result. Yet, the quantity of published material is still impressive and can be explained in a number of ways.

It is likely that Leikin was exacting with deadlines, despite being concerned with achieving the highest quality in the stories he published. He wanted as many stories as Chekhov could produce. Gromov suggests that writing for the humour magazines came easily to Chekhov. The firm formal guidelines would assist such output and, as


13At times Leikin freed Chekhov to borrow bits from other writers’ works for his own pieces and encouraged Chekhov not to re-write his work, since nobody else did (cited from Gromov 129-130). Gromov records these letters from Leikin as being dated 10 August 1883 and 27 May 1886. For the full text of the first see Perepiska A.P. Chekhova v trekh tomakh (Moskva: Nasledie, 1996), 1: 157-160. I have not located the text of the second letter.

14Great quantity also demanded a pragmatic attitude towards his work. Chekhov draws on all these reasons when explaining, in his now famous letter of March 1886 to the writer Grigorovich (1822-1899), one of the grand men of Russian prose (most famous for his stories of the late 1840s), why he treated his work lightly (Chekhov, Pis’ma, 1: 218 (28 March 1886)). Compared with his studies and family relations at that time in his life, Chekhov’s writing, as he admitted to Grigorovich, was likely what he regarded most lightly of the three.

15[...] Чехову все давалось легко, непознавательно легко, без усилий, без всяких помарок. О легкости чеховского пера среди осколочной молодежи ходили легенды: очевидцы утверждали, что рассказы и сцены для Лейкина Чехов писал прямо набело, да и вообще работал как бы между прочим, даже при гостях, отвлекаясь на минуту-другую, чтобы записать фразу, только что пришедшую на ум (Gromov 20).
Chekhov would express years later in a letter of 1888 to Pleshcheev, for him, method accounted for half of talent.\(^\text{16}\) In addition, there were other pressures that forced Chekhov to write as much as he could. There were ceaseless family urgencies that the money from his publications helped to ease and that caused his writing to demand his spare moments. With time Chekhov’s family circumstances did improve. And, despite moments when he seemingly expressed indifference and cynicism, Chekhov played a significantly supportive -- if lonely and demanding -- role in his family’s affairs, which through these years were never far from desperate.\(^\text{17}\)

Chekhov maintained a balance between his studies and writing throughout his time at Moscow University, graduating from medical school in June 1884 and publishing a collection of short prose, *Tales of Melpomene. Six Stories by A. Chekhonte* [Сказки Мельпомены. Шесть рассказов А. Чехонте], that same year. Following graduation he seemed to become busier, practising medicine furiously and writing in a variety of forms. At the end of that summer Chekhov began to publish in serial form the longest work he would ever produce, *A Shooting Party* [Драма на охоте], whose instalments appeared until April 1885.\(^\text{18}\) Chekhov secured more lasting results, however, from three relationships that were established that year. He received his initial request for a story from *Petersburg News* in May. Then, at the end of 1885, Chekhov made his first visit to Petersburg, where he met -- although briefly -- Aleksei

\(^{16}\)Chekhov, *Pis’ma*, 2: 211 (6 March 1888). Chekhov was speaking about analysts in general: “для аналитика, будь он ученый или критик, метод составляет половину таланта”.

\(^{17}\)Chekhov’s letters reveal his efforts and his stamina. See, for instance, his letters to G.P. Kravtsov (29 January 1883) and, more famously, Leikin (21-24 August 1883) in Chekhov, *Pis’ma*, 1: 50 and 1: 81-82, respectively.

\(^{18}\)See the newspaper *News of the Day* [Новости дня] from №212 (4 August 1884) to №111 (25 April 1885) as outlined in Chekhov, *Sochinenia*, 3: 589.
Sergeyevich Suvorin (1834-1912), journalist and publisher of the daily *New Time* [Новое время], and Grigorovich, and where Chekhov arranged with Leikin to publish a collection of Chekhov's stories.

In the spring of 1886 the collection *Motley Stories* [Пестрые рассказы] appeared, gathering 77 of the stories that Chekhov published between 1883 and 1886. In the press, reception to the stories was mixed, but the year had already started on a positive note. In February Chekhov published a story in Suvorin's *New Time* for the first time, beginning both a fruitful working relationship and, for the most part, a caring friendship that would last to the end of the century. Less rigidly demanding than Leikin, Suvorin provided Chekhov with added freedom, the impact of which can be aligned with developments in Chekhov's writing. Chekhov's stories were acquiring more depth, often presenting the fictional world from the character's point of view or from the character's reaction to it, rather than offering a depiction limited to situational interaction or character traits. With such stories as "Heartache" [Тоска], "Dreams" [Мечты] and "Vanka," Chekhov was sensitively revealing the disparity between his characters' internal nature or aspirations and the seemingly indifferent world around them.

These developments are similarly evident in "Verochka" and "The Kiss"

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20 For a survey of the collection's reception, see Chekhov, *Sochineniia*, 2: 474-479. The collection was successful.

21 Rayfield records that Suvorin started Chekhov at 12 kopecks a line and allowed Chekhov three times the length that Leikin had permitted (Rayfield, *Anton Chekhov*, 128). The story was "Requiem" [Панихида] and appeared in the Saturday supplement [otdel "Subbotniki"] to *New Time* №3581 (15 February 1886).
stories of 1887 in which Chekhov was able to detail more fully his characterisations. The newer stories were less pieces that focused simply on a predicament and appeared more as reflections on how life prepared the character for such an experience. Such an attitude to his work was already evident in "The Malefactor" and "Sergeant Prishibeev," stories whose characters touted their lifelong convictions and habits, and even in "The Mistress" [Барыня 1882], an obviously earlier work whose characters -- stereotypically perhaps -- live out the peasant-landlord and patriarchal peasant relationships to which their lives are bound. In "Verochka" and "The Kiss," Chekhov shades in another dimension, justifying the characters' words and actions by their feelings and thoughts, personalising those words and actions without moralising them.

After 1887 Chekhov would never again publish so many works annually as he had done each year of the first third of his writing career. Yet almost everything that appeared after 1887 could be considered an exemplary, if not exceptional, work.

For Chekhov, 1888 was remarkable for at least two concrete achievements. In March his long story "Steppe" [Степь] appeared in the journal Northern Herald and declared Chekhov's breakthrough into the "thick journals." The story brought Chekhov critical acclaim, most notably among the literati. Its proceeds provided Chekhov and his family freedom from the worries that financial hardship had delivered. The foothold in a thick journal, together with the publication's critical and financial

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22 Northern Herald №3 (March 1888), 75-167. Referring to letters sent to Chekhov, Gromov records that as early as 1886 M.N. Remezov, an editor for the "thick journal" Russian Thought [Русская мысль], approached Chekhov for either one or a few of his stories [рассказы]. In late 1887, on behalf of the editorial board at Northern Herald, Korolenko asked Chekhov to write a long story [bol'shaia povest'] (Gromov 182-183).
success, released Chekhov from the constant pressure of publishing for the weeklies. Secondly, if the publication in *Northern Herald* had not completely eased Chekhov into the mainstream of Russia's foremost young writers, the honour Chekhov received later that year surely did. In autumn, the Russian Academy awarded Chekhov the Pushkin Prize for literature, which he shared with Korolenko.

Of Chekhov's prose writings that appeared in 1889, "A Dreary Story" [Скучная история] might be considered the year's most successful. Certainly, Leikin claimed "A Dreary Story" to be Chekhov's best piece yet. This was a noteworthy admission for the two had become more and more distant, and Leikin had shown occasional signs of indignation toward Chekhov since Chekhov had come to rely less on *Fragments*.

In March of 1890 Chekhov published a collection of stories, *Gloomy Folk* [Хмурые люди], and, shortly after, the story "The Thieves" [Воры] appeared in *New Time*. It was all he would publish before leaving on 21 April for Russia's far east, to the penal colony on the island of Sakhalin. When not working on the collection or "The Thieves," Chekhov filled the first three months of the year reading all he could on Siberia, seeking out advice about his journey, and trying to gain other possible means of assistance. Chekhov arrived in Sakhalin in early July, remained there three months,

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24*Northern Herald* №11 (November 1889), 73-130. The epithet dreary, dull and boring have appeared in English translations of, and English commentaries on, "Skuchnaia istoriia." The importance of reading skuchnyi as sad, as represented also by the Russian grustnyi, has been underscored for me by Greta Matevossian and Joseph L. Conrad. I am grateful for their advice. I will refer to the work as "A Dreary Story."

25The story first appeared as "Devils" [Черти] in *New Time* №5061 (1 April 1890), 2-3. For his *Collected Works* (1899-1902) Chekhov revised the story and changed the title (the editors of the *PSSP* view the re-working as ser'ezeishaia pererabotka (Chekhov, *Sochineniia*, 7: 681)).
and returned to Moscow by sea through the Far East, arriving in December.

Chekhov was no stranger to solitude and isolation -- both imposed and chosen. From 1876 until 1879 he lived in Taganrog apart from his immediate family members. His parents and siblings made their ways to Moscow, and Chekhov was left to sell the family belongings to support them as they eked out existences. Through much of his life he would bear this role, sharing the wealth from his publications and medical work and contributing his humour and mettle through his letters and presence. At times after the onset of his tuberculosis he must have felt apart from the world, preoccupied by the uncertain power of the illness and the certain arrival of early death. But all Chekhov's isolation cannot be seen as negative or as the fateful acceptance of his lot. For those years he was alone in Taganrog he excelled at school. In later years, surely, moments of isolation afforded Chekhov the working conditions to study and consider his medical procedures, and to establish himself as a preeminent writer. And, in his choice to travel to Sakhalin one must see a wish of Chekhov's to be alone. For such a short, but extraordinary, life, isolation and, perhaps, loneliness were ordinary occurrences, occurrences worthy of portrayal in his fiction, too.

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26A telling letter from Chekhov to Suvorin of 14 October 1888 reveals Chekhov's concern for the effects of tuberculosis in himself and in general (Chekhov, Pis'ma, 3: 28).

27For a probing, if one-sided (praisingely so) study of how Chekhov managed and sought isolation, see V.N. Kostylev, "Urok odinochestva," in Chekhovskie chteniiia v Ital'e: Chekhov i XX vek (Moskva: Nasledie, 1997), 120-134.

28From Chekhov's admiration for the explorer Nikolai Przhevalsky, Rayfield supposes that "[w]hat aroused Chekhov's enthusiasm was the image of the lone traveller deserting family and friends, trekking to the ends of the earth to die" (Rayfield, Anton Chekhov, 183-184).
Some thirty years ago Robert Louis Jackson, drawing on an observation made by the Russian critic and cultural historian D.N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, proposed that for Chekhov a man’s meaningful life resulted from a lone search, unaided beforehand by set models based in science, reason or religion. Nearly a decade later Donald Rayfield, commenting on the importance of sexual love in many of Chekhov’s later stories and plays, observed that “falling in love and acting on it amount to a brave self-fulfilment. [...] the commitment of one human being to another is one of the few ways in which the Chekhovian character can break out of his isolation and get round the uselessness of words for communication.”

Among other things, both critics are making two points. First, they are suggesting that a lone and isolated existence (be it physically, ideologically, or socially isolated) is a common, even usual one in Chekhov’s fictional worlds. This point can be applied to many of Chekhov’s writings. Second, when they refer to a meaningful life or to a character’s breaking out of his isolation, they are speaking about a kind of harmony that a select group of Chekhov’s characters achieve, a harmony that evolves from a condition of isolation and that brings to life the potential for self-expression. One of the clearest examples of their -- certainly, Rayfield’s -- points is presented in Chekhov’s later story, “The Lady with the Small Dog” [Дама с собачкой 1899]. In Chekhov’s stories of the 1880s such harmony is hard to find, and Chekhov’s characters exist despite their isolation. More common themes in the earlier,

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shorter stories are the elusiveness of harmony, the likelihood of misunderstanding, and the difficulties of communication and mutual acceptance, fertile situations and themes for comic and dramatic renderings of loneliness and isolation. The themes and situations were fertile enough that one can note generally how in Chekhov's stories isolation receives no single application or employment, occurs for various reasons, affects an array of characters, and is not addressed with any single response.31

My thesis in this chapter is that the theme of isolation unites decidedly different stories in Chekhov's work of the 1880s. Moreover, in his stories of the 1880s the use of many characters, settings, situations, narrative voices and story types reveals both a variety of ways in which Chekhov employed isolation and the likelihood that Chekhov

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31 As a recurring theme in Chekhov's stories of the 1880s, isolation has not received a satisfactorily detailed discussion. This chapter aims towards filling in that gap. Four current examinations touch on isolation in Chekhov's prose, but do not treat it as their focus over a variety of Chekhov's works of the 1880s. In Cathy Popkin's The Pragmatics of Insignificance: Chekhov, Zoshchenko, Gogol (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), the chapter on Chekhov has two main goals: to identify what comprises a significant event in Chekhov's stories and, by grouping the events according to one of four narrative strategies, to explore what roles the event plays both within the fictional world and in the story-reader relationship. Frank F. Seeley's essay "On Interpersonal Relations in Chekhov's Fiction," in From the Heyday of the Superfluous Man to Chekhov. Essays on 19th Century Russian Literature, 161-185 (Nottingham: Astra Press, 1994) examines human relationships in stories Chekhov wrote after the mid-1880s and proposes that three general patterns are evident: non-relations, functional relations, and personal relations. Both studies acknowledge ways in which characters exclude themselves or others at that moment when the story captures them. It is neither their goal nor a secondary aim to discuss or account for such recurring circumstances in Chekhov's stories. Yet the authors recognize, if simply through the evidence assigned to their typologies, that isolation is a recurring theme in Chekhov's writing of the 1880s.

In his Khudozhestvennyi mir prozy A.P. Chekhova (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1982), the Soviet scholar Vladimir Linkov devotes a substantial section to character estrangement [otchuzhdenie] (75-95). For the largest part of his study, however, he explores this topic as it appears in stories Chekhov published after his trip to Sakhalin.

Joseph Conrad provides a thematic reading of stories that Chekhov published from 1886 to 1888. In the stories he selects for his essay, he examines the tension that results when Chekhov's characters struggle to live in harmony either with others or with their surroundings. Some characters lose their struggle and end up alone, even cut off from others and thus isolated. While he looks carefully at aspects of isolation, his focus is character and reader response to each story's closing ("Unresolved Tension in Chekov's Stories, 1886-1888," Slavic and East European Journal, vol. 16, no. 1 (1972), 55-64).
regarded isolation -- be it physical, social, psychological, or emotional -- as a most natural human condition. I start by looking at two early isolation stories and propose that Chekhov used isolation as a comic device that still makes a piercing point. Then, I look at four ways that isolation arises in stories Chekhov wrote after 1885, stories in which characters isolate themselves, isolate another, endure isolation, and face a new experience after having lived in isolation. Finally, I examine a longer, later work -- "A Dreary Story" -- in which Chekhov brings together most of these aspects of isolation. In this last story, the hero's isolation seems to snowball because he does not recognise it, and isolation becomes both the product and burden of his life.

Two Early Stories

In two works of 1883, "The Thief" [Bop] and "The Fat Man and the Thin Man," appear examples of isolation that depict it as an unexpected and unnecessary outcome brought on simply but startlingly by human foibles. Such devices as surprise occurrences and quick reversals of fortune give the stories a comic flavour. In both stories Chekhov chooses isolation as the outcome of his characters.

"The Thief" relates the frustration the story's central character, Fedor Stepanych, feels isolated in Siberian exile. A woman, Olia, convinced him to steal for her. She needed money and agreed that, if he was caught while stealing, she would join him in exile, his likely punishment. However, her promise was empty. He was caught and she stayed behind. Fedor Stepanych's loneliness is indicated by his many

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32Rayfield sees 1883 as time of change in Chekhov's writing, noting that "the bulk of the work of 1882 is in itself worthless," and that when Chekhov "was compiling his collected works at the turn of the century, he did not include any of the pieces written before 1883." See Rayfield, Evolution of his Art, 23.
comparisons of "here" with "there" and the recurring smells, sounds and images from his past that come to him, as if they were replacing all that he sees before him. His frustration is forcefully played out in a pathetic, unnecessary act in which Fedor Stepanych kills his landlady's pet bird. The image of the bird in the cage clearly reflects his own situation. For committing this act he is evicted from his lodgings. The thoughtless justification for killing the bird parallels the limited reasoning behind the theft. And, as the botched theft leads to exile, because he killed the bird Fedor Stepanych is sent from the place he considered a home. As if to mock his situation, Olia arrives at the penal community. Barabaev, another thief in the community who was sentenced together with Fedor Stepanych, and who, as Fedor Stepanych points out, stole more than he did, sent her money for her trip and promised her a monthly allowance if she stayed.

Chekhov portrays the disquieting feeling of isolation that Fedor Stepanych encounters in this new place by expressing the longing and feelings that trigger his sensibilities:

И он задумался о «там»... Там теперь под ногами не грязный снег, не холодные лужи, а молодая зелень; там ветер не бьет по лицу, как мокрая тряпка, а несет дыхание весны... Небо там темнее, но звездное, с белой полосой на востоке... Вместо этого грязного забора зеленый палисадник и его домик с тремя окнами. За окнами светлые, теплые комнаты. В одной из них стол, покрытый белой скатертью, с куличами, закусками, водками...
(2: 108).

He starts to think of life there [tam] because of what he has to endure here, in the penal community. The twist, of course, is that Fedor Stepanych is being punished for his act, he has not merely relocated: he has been isolated from his home to think about and pay for his actions, but he wants it to be like home. Fedor Stepanych is stuck with the reality of his actions and with no one to blame but himself; he has brought about the
very isolation that causes him to long for home.

Isolation reduces Fedor Stepanych's actions to folly, raising questions about the worth of Olia's affection and the value of integrity. Isolation prompts these questions and -- even though it does not instruct Fedor Stepanych -- raises a sense of frustration in him that attunes his awareness to how quickly a careless act can change his life.

In the original version of "The Fat Man and the Thin Man," the freedom and usually jolly relations enjoyed by Misha and Porfirii, the lead characters, turn strange because of a blunder, and the fat man severs the bond of their friendship, isolating the thin man in that relationship.\textsuperscript{33}

The two men meet at a train station for the first time in years and strike up a lively chat. When they start to talk about their work, the thin man explains that he has a new boss and, from what he has heard, the boss is a "swine" [skotina]. It turns out that the fat man is that new boss, and he responds to what the thin man has said by cutting off their friendly banter and replacing it with a formal tone. The warm relations and fond recollections have withstood the passing of time and might have continued unchanged. However, from the fat man's perspective, these feelings cannot overcome the comment of the thin man or the new establishment of their working relationship. What the thin man learns also astounds him; the new awareness so physically and emotionally affects the thin man, his wife and son (Nathaniel) that even their suitcases, bundles, and boxes seem to writhe in discomfort.\textsuperscript{34} Following the thin

\textsuperscript{33}The story first appeared in Fragments №40 (1 October 1883), 5. It was revised for inclusion in the collection Motley Stories [Пестрые рассказы](1886). On the revision, see Chekhov, Sochineniia, 2: 250-251, 440. My reading is based on the 1883 version.

\textsuperscript{34}This transformation recalls a Gogolian one. When Piskarev ("Nevskii Prospekt") is struck by the glance of the woman he is chasing, the street appears to transform around him.
man's seeming slip, two sentences from the fat man change the terms on which the thin man regards his old friend:

...Здесь буду служить. Начальник, говорят, скотина; ну да чёрт с ним!.. Уживусь как-нибудь. Однодневец он твой. Ну, а ты как? Небось, уже статский? А?
-- Тэк-с... Так это вы, стало быть, секретарем ко мне назначены? -- сказал басом толстый, надувшись вдруг, как индийский петух. -- Поздно, милостивый государь, на службу являетесь... Поздно-с...
-- Вв...вы? Это вы?.. Я, ваше превосходительство...
Тонкий вдруг побледнел, но скоро лицо его искривилось во все стороны широчайшей улыбкой... Сам он съежился, сгорбился, сузился... Его чемоданы, узлы и картинки съежились, поморщились... Длинный подбородок жены стал еще длиннее; Нафансий вытянулся во фронт и инстинктивно, по рефлексу, застегнул все пуговки своего мундира...
-- Я, ваше превосходительство... (2: 439).

For both characters, the personal form of address gives way to the formal one, and their relationship changes. They begin to communicate differently, in a language that subordinates the personal relationship to an official one and pushes the characters apart. Chekhov pokes fun at this change, stressing its importance but presenting it as a mutually condoned, quick reversal that changes the characters from friends to seeming strangers. Isolation arises because they cannot commit to their friendship in the midst of formal distinctions, and the once-warm bond becomes an historical fact.

In these two early stories, isolation opposes the happiness these characters foresaw or enjoyed. Chekhov treats firmly and satirically the petty decisions and single-mindedness that inspire characters' actions, using isolation as these characters' pathetic outcome. In stories Chekhov wrote after 1885, priorities and expectations bring about a character's isolation, too. In such stories, these aspects of a character's conduct evolve into obsessive behaviour and callous demands that can drive a character's neighbours, closest relations and the gentlest people away from him, alienating them and isolating himself.
The title character of “Sergeant Prishibeev” isolates himself from his community with his obsessive and excessive actions. The story is set in a courtroom. Prishibeev has been accused of insulting two local constables, a district elder, a couple of official witnesses and six peasants. Prishibeev believes that his fellow townsfolk do not know what is good for them. «А мужик,» notes Prishibeev before the examining magistrate, «простой человек, он ничего не понимает и должен меня слушать, потому -- для его же пользы» (4: 122). To his mind, only he appreciates what comprises the right way to act. His guidelines are taken strictly from formally written laws, and he will not permit people to stray from these rules. His trial, for instance, comes about because he felt people were gathering unlawfully: «По какому полному праву тут народ собрался? спрашиваю. Зачем? Нет, что в законе сказано, чтоб народ табуном ходил?» (4: 121). His conviction, pompous in itself, is taken to its extreme when Prishibeev resorts to force to maintain order:

The bulk of the story exemplifies the reasons for Prishibeev's isolation. Since his return to the village from military service fifteen years earlier, he has appointed himself the village prefect and assumed the responsibility of maintaining order and discipline. Unable to control himself, he disturbs the usual peace rather than maintain it. As one elder notes of Prishibeev's actions, «Намедни по изbam ходил, приказывал, чтоб песней не пели и чтоб огней не жгли. Закона, говорит, такого нет,
This extreme personality is material for farce, and Chekhov turns the scenario into comedy when Prishibeev unintentionally implicates himself. Prishibeev’s verbose and self-righteous defence before the investigator exemplifies the acts for which he is charged.

Chekhov employs the trial situation to detail the attitude that symbolises Prishibeev’s life, an attitude whose resultant actions earn him scorn from others in the community and the courtroom. Even after he is sentenced, Prishibeev does not see the examining magistrate’s or his townsfolk’s point that his actions are excessive. As he walks out of the courtroom, he comes upon a crowd of people and uncontrollably feels the need to disperse them:

...выйдя из камеры и увидев мужиков, которые толпятся и говорят о чем-то, он по привычке, с которой уже совладать не может, вытягивает руки по швам и кричит хриплым, сердитым голосом:
-- Наррод, расходься! Не толпись! По домам! (4: 125).

Convinced that his single perspective is a correct one and overcome by this conviction, Prishibeev brings about his own isolation in the community.

Isolation is an actively realised product of Prishibeev’s demeanour: for Prishibeev, to express himself is to isolate himself. Since he cannot change, isolation is Prishibeev’s only possible state. In Prishibeev, Chekhov exaggerates a common human concern -- attention to rules -- embellishing Prishibeev’s actions to the point that they seem farcical. Excessive action of Prishibeev’s sort becomes exclusive and isolating because only he can determine if others are keeping in line. Recall that he does not condemn merely those who break the rules; in addition, Prishibeev condemns those who perform actions that are not prescribed by rules. This obsessive limiting of people’s actions leads to paranoia and insecurity within the community, for the townsfolk are...
unable to keep Prishibeev to the periphery. But, as long as Prishibeev is part of the community, the other obvious way to end isolation -- that is to say, to allow the gap between Prishibeev and members of the community to be closed -- is to have everyone conform to the ways of Prishibeev.\textsuperscript{35} Judging from the community's responses to Prishibeev, this is not an option.

Isolation appears as the product of an excessively obsessive character also in Chekhov's 1886 story "At the Mill" [На мельнице]. "At the Mill" describes a few moments at the place of Aleksei Biriukov, the district's only miller. A miserly and nasty man, he ill-treats two monks who stop by to use his mill. Not unlike Prishibeev, Aleksei adheres closely to his own code of rules, accusing the monks of fishing the river illegally. He threatens to take justice into his own hands if they do not follow his rules, disregarding who they are and what they stand for: «А то и сам, без мирового справлюсь. Попаду на реке и так шею накостыляю, что до страшного суда рыбы не захочешь!» (5: 408).

Later and, perhaps, more importantly, Aleksei makes little of -- indeed, almost ignores -- the visit of his mother. Her first words of greeting are warm, even fond. Shortly, the reason for her visit become clear: she and her other son need money. Her request is hopeful and respectful, and in it she draws on Aleksei's positive qualities to state her case:

\begin{quote}
-- Он бедный, а ты -- слава тебе, господи! И мельница у тебя своя, и огороды держишь, и рыбой торгешь... Тебя господь и умудрил, и возвеличил супротив всех, и насытал... И одинокий ты... А у Васи четверо детей, я на его шее живу, окаянная, а жалованья-то всего он семь рублей
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{35}On the hero's actions in "Sergeant Prishibeev" as "hyperbolisation of the rule of the State" or "political types" peculiar to tsarist Russia, see Rayfield, \textit{Evolution of his Art}, 42 and Karlinsky in Chekhov, \textit{Letters}, 24.
Following an uncomfortable silence she realises that Aleksei would rather not spare any money and, in a moment of frustration, she voices her sad view of what Aleksei has become:

Всем ты у меня хоро: и умён, и красавец, и из купцов купец, но не похож ты на настоящего человека! Неприветливый, нigkeita не улыбнешься, доброго слова не скажешь, немилостивый, словно зверь какой... [...] Девки и ребята близко подходить боятся, всякая тварь тебя сторонится (5: 411).

Having said this, she turns to leave. He stops her, reaches into his pocket, and from a wad of money finds a twenty-kopeck coin. The narrator describes how with obvious pain he hands it to her: «Мельник оглядел его, потер между пальцами и, крякнув, побагровев, подал его матери» (5: 412).

In the first quote, the mother’s words “and you are alone” [I odinokii ty] act like a hinge in her short passage. First she stresses Aleksei’s capabilities and material achievement as noteworthy. Then she contrasts his need only to look after himself to his brother’s responsibility for the five members in his (the brother’s) family. She means to play on Aleksei’s humane qualities, most notably his sense of sympathy. In the second quote, voiced when the first effort fails, she accounts negatively for why he is alone in life, opposing his material well-being to his moral well-being. She speaks objectively. She pities his loneliness, knowing, however, why he is alone. She never suggests openly a reason for why he acts as he does. She keeps to the results of his actions. Then in the quote from the story’s final paragraph (the third quote), he reveals a side to his closed-off self that, perhaps, explains his nastiness. He shows his priorities, the ones his mother did not mention: his affection for what he alone has earned and his protective and greedy pinching of these earnings. The achievements his
mother outlines seem to confirm the material productivity of his actions and, thus, justify his maintaining his nastily earned isolation. Social isolation is both the product of his actions and -- if his achievements are to be based on his past actions -- the key to his future material success.

The story does not suggest that Aleksei became nasty and miserly. It shows simply that he is that way. His attitude and feelings reveal reasons for his separateness, that he is an incorrigible character who is unwilling and unable to overcome his greed. He does everything he can to alienate others and maintain his distance from them. Moreover, he believes he has the right to act as he does. The extent of this point is brutally exposed merely by how Chekhov opposes Aleksei first to the monks and then to his mother.

Incompatibility marks the relations outlined in these stories and is at the heart of each story’s presentation of isolation. Excessive action is inflexible, inherently isolating. Obsession and incompatibility emerge in “The Huntsman” [Ерепь 1885], too, a story Chekhov published three months before “Sergeant Prishibeev” appeared in print. The hero’s need for freedom and conditions that will allow him to hunt are his defining features. This obsessive aspect of his character causes him to move away from Pelageia -- his young wife whom he was tricked into marrying -- away from a life that closes him in. Certainly, aspects of isolation appear in this story, but there is a sense that the topic is raised more softly. Egor does not want isolation; rather, he wants to be free

36 In “At the Mill” “the psychology of the characters is consistently depicted only from external observation.” See A.P. Chudakov, Chekhov’s Poetics, Edwina Jannie Cruise and Donald Dragt, trans. (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1983), 29.

37 Of “The Huntsman” Hahn has remarked that the lives of Egor and Pelageia “embody opposite principles: he is mobile and carefree, while she is bound, by work and domesticity, to the place where she was brought up.” Egor himself observes to Pelageia: «Я для тебя дикий
from a peasant life and free to hunt. Unlike Aleksei and Prishibeev, he does not want to impose his beliefs on others. He merely wants to express his passion. His chosen life happens to be on the periphery of that society.

One reading of these works would suggest that these casual, though obsessive, traits reveal how characters bring a lone life, even an isolated one, upon themselves. With almost deadpan seriousness Chekhov draws attention to harshly obvious features of the isolation these stories portray: the characters seem unable to control this aspect of their personality, and this aspect invariably troubles, even hurts, others who dare to impinge on the heroes' domains.

Some force of their character causes Prishibeev and Aleksei to isolate themselves from others. None of the men sees the need to remedy this situation. In fact, it could be argued forcibly that they cannot remedy it. Chekhov is after individual moments and individual characters, not bold philosophies on the need for or results of personal isolation. In none of the stories are characters able to overcome their separateness; there is no common ground, they are unable to give themselves freely to anything that does not allow them full personal expression.

*Isolating Another*

Isolation as discrimination occurs in the short story “A Chorus Girl” [Хористка 1886]. The story presents a heroine, Pasha, whose human qualities are ignored and abused, establishing a prejudicial relationship. Chekhov employs a comic situation (the husband hiding as his mistress chats with his wife at the front door) that is lost in the shadows.
of the social prejudices that inform how the male character and his wife wilfully
disparage Pasha, and thus confirm her isolation. In this story isolation does not arise
because Pasha is removed physically or cut off from the world mentally, spiritually, or
eemotionally. Rather, she is excluded from a level in a social hierarchy that the story's
other characters perceive to exist. It is isolation by social caste. The husband and wife
accept this distinction and use it to bolster their self-righteousness and to absolve
themselves from responsibility in anything that happens between them and Pasha. To
their way of thinking, Pasha is like a bad virus from which they have to protect
themselves. This understanding makes the abuse happen. Pasha, herself, admits that
she is different from the husband and wife, but she cannot bring herself -- no matter
how extreme their actions become -- to ignore their human traits.

In addition to her usual job, Pasha entertains men. On one such occasion, as she
entertains a man named Kolpakov, his wife appears at Pasha's door. During the wife's
short visit, she berates Pasha. Apparently, Kolpakov used money that was not his, and
the wife has come to Pasha to claim back gifts given to her by Kolpakov. In response to
the wife's overwrought display of contentious entreaties and condemnations, Pasha
hands over most of her jewellery before the wife thanklessly leaves. Pasha is further
badmouthed by Kolpakov, who was hiding during the wife's visit, before he runs after
his wife: «Боже мой, она, порядочная, гордая, чистая... даже на колени хотела стать
перед... перед этой девкой! И я довел ее до этого! Я допустил!» (5: 215). Pasha is
left crying, thinking back to an equally disparaging time: «Паша легла и стала громко
плакать. Ей уже было жаль своих вещей, которые она сгоряча отдала, и было
обидно. Она вспомнила, как три года назад ее ни за что, ни про что побил один
купец, и еще громче заплакала» (5: 215). The slight by Kolpakov and the verbal and
psychological abuse dealt by his wife parallel the assault Pasha underwent three years earlier. The parallel defines Pasha's life, suggesting that she lives in a particular type of isolation, and emphasises the extent of the actions taken against her, actions others feel they can freely take.38

From the story's opening, the topic of segregating or categorising people is raised. Kolpakov makes a distinction between types of people that comments on his biases as well as his conscience. At the sound of the doorbell he runs to hide so as not to be seen by the wrong person. The narrator notes: «Колпаков не стеснялся ни подруг Паши, ни почтальонов, но на всякий случай взял в охапку свое платье и пошел в смежную комнату, а Паша побежала отворять дверь» (5: 209). His hiding suggests that his presence with Pasha can be judged to be wrong if witnessed by particular people, but not by Pasha's friends or the postman, for instance. His conscience or sense of propriety is selective, for he will feel shame only if his act falls before a certain public scrutiny.

The wife, too, makes a stand that from the start implies her dominance before Pasha. She immediately attacks Pasha, referring to her as nothing less than a repulsive [gadkaia], base [podlaia] and foul [merzkaia] being, and takes some pleasure in finally being able to express this to Pasha (5: 210). She blames Pasha alone for bringing Kolpakov and his family to ruin: «Его хотят арестовать. Вот что вы наделали!» (5: 210). Twice Pasha makes the point that she did not force Kolpakov to visit her, and twice the wife ignores Pasha. Their meeting is not supposed to be a dialogue: the wife is to maintain control, state her demands, and make the accusations.

38 "We notice the care with which Chekhov avoids the neat ending. The story must be returned to the inexplicable continuing human experience" (Pritchett 40).
The wife has come to Pasha to do nothing more than exploit her and hurt her.

She is not prepared to feel sympathy or understanding for Pasha. Indeed, the wife does all she can to wield power over Pasha. When she wonders aloud «Убить эту мерзавку или на колени стать перед ней, что ли?» (5: 213), she expresses her disdain and indifference for Pasha -- she could as easily perform one act as the other. She even invokes the power of religious code -- «Бог всё видит! Он справедлив!» (5: 210) -- but does not imagine that such a code might apply to her or her husband, too. Her rightness is not to be challenged.

Pasha, too, recognises social differences, but does not see that they create reasons for human indifference or cause for scorn: Pasha does not see social differences as grounds to isolate. She knows the woman who appears at her door is a particular type of woman, a woman who is «молодая, красивая, благородно одетая и, по всем видимостям, из порядочных» (5: 209 -- my emphasis). In an effort to imagine how she must appear before the strange woman, Pasha sees herself as not respectable: «И ей казалось, что если бы она была худенькая, не напудренная и без чёлки, то можно было бы скрыть, что она непорядочная, и было бы не так страшно и стыдно стоять перед незнакомой, таинственной дамой» (5: 210). Despite these feelings and her awareness of who the woman is, Pasha recognises the wife's acts for what they are -- a means to exalt herself and humiliate Pasha: «Она [Паша] чувствовала, что эта бледная, красивая барыня, которая выражается благородно, как в театре, в самом деле может стать перед ней на колени, именно из гордости, из благородства, чтобы возвысить себя и унизить хористку» (5: 214). Through all this Pasha helps the wife. She does not ask the wife to leave and, eventually, gives her over 500 roubles' worth of her own jewellery. Pasha does not do this because she feels physically threatened.
Unlike the attitude of the wife or husband, Pasha’s sense of humanity is not exclusive.

At the end of the story, Kolpakov forcefully berates Pasha. He enacts the social distinction that his hiding had implied when the story opened. And he reveals that his relationship with Pasha is merely one of convenience. Despite all she did for Kolpakov and his wife, Pasha receives only abuse from him when he appears from his hiding spot. He heard the entire meeting between Pasha and his wife and knows that Pasha gave away most of her jewellery. Before he leaves, he blames Pasha for all that has happened, without acknowledging the jewellery or her silence before his wife about his hiding. His concern is for his wife, whom he continues to regard as respectable [poriadochnaia], proud [gordaia] and pure [chistaia], despite her treatment of Pasha. Moreover, he sees that his affair brought his wife to act as she did and, like his wife, blames Pasha for causing the unpleasantness. Both come to Pasha to take from her what they want and act in ways they would not act before the other.

Isolation appears in the story as a type of social discrimination. For all three characters, that Pasha is different from the other two is a fact of their social awareness. The relationship is clearly established and even binding, such that Pasha is reduced to a role-player and dehumanised (Pasha, as she explains to Kolpakov's wife, is obliged to entertain such a man as Kolpakov: “Нам нельзя не принимать” (5: 213)). This couple tends not to view Pasha as a personality: Kolpakov and his wife make no effort to see as Pasha does or to accept that communication between them might be possible. They brush Pasha aside, making more concrete the division that exists between them and making humanity exclusive. Their indifference to Pasha’s feelings is blatant, self-serving and unmerciful and Pasha is psychologically and emotionally abused. The comment here is more a social one than a personal one, one that refers to
how members of society judge others. Isolation, in this case, does not occur at the moment of the relationship. The isolating barriers already exist in theory; they simply are made concrete when Pasha meets with Kolpakov and his wife. Social prejudices and feelings of importance convince Kolpakov and his wife that they are better than Pasha and that they rightfully can push her around because she lives outside their defined community. Isolation is one of the social evils with which Pasha must contend.

Such a structure appeared in such other 1886 stories as “Aniuta” and “The Witch” [Ведьма], but the consistencies among the stories do not reflect Chekhov’s lack of creative skills. They might express more accurately Chekhov’s opinion that women are more likely to experience such circumstances.39 A slight twist to such a reading is that the women in these stories do show strength, or at least the ability to endure.

Kolpakov and his wife share features with Prishibeev when they brandish self-righteousness and supremacy to bolster their opinions, rarely revealing the slightest sense that their opinions are harsh, let alone wrong. They are oblivious to the possibility that their words and actions are inconsistent with the outcomes they hope for or the reasoning they proclaim. This blindness leads to their indiscriminately accepting their judgments as correct and necessary ones.40 The poses these characters assume distance them from such feelings as compassion, understanding or thoughtfulness, from elementary features of human relations, and they openly isolate others.

39In her study of Chekhov’s work Beverly Hahn devotes a chapter to examining how Chekhov wrote about women and how he approached the topic of sexual relations. She sees in Chekhov’s writing his “conviction about the suppressed potentialities of women” (Hahn 212).

40In this sense, I.N. Sukhikh describes the siuzhet of many of Chekhov’s 1885-1887 stories as paradoxical: “Более широкое понимание этого типа сюжета — как парадоксального, внутренне противоречивого обнаружения характера героя, не обязательно связанного с его субъективным открытием, просвещением, — значительно расширяет эту группу произведений”. See his Problemy poetiki A.P. Chekhova (Leningrad: Izd. Len. u-ta, 1982), 59-60.
Enduring Isolation

I proposed earlier that in some of Chekhov's stories character traits easily evolve into obsessive behaviour and callous demands that can drive a character's neighbours, closest relations and the gentlest people away from him, alienating them and isolating himself. However, isolation does not appear simply in those of Chekhov's stories that focus on a character's choices. For instance, isolation can test characters; it can cause them to seek solace and strength from unexpected sources.

One way to look at the works "Misery" [Горе 1885] and "Heartache" [Тоска 1886] is to regard them as isolation stories. Their heroes lose something that is dear to them. They long for its return. We can call these works isolation stories because, first, their heroes recognize the separation and, second, the stories chronicle how the heroes experience this change to their usual world. The heroes are irrevocably separated from a vital force, and that separation creates certain needs or desires in them. As the heroes interact with that desire, they display their capacity to endure the loss that causes their isolation.

The lead character of "Misery," 60-year-old Grigorii Petrov, spends most of the story on a journey through a snowstorm to the doctor. The night before, his wife appeared to be dying and he realized that if he did not get help, she would die. As the narrator reveals, Grigorii Petrov is not up to the task. Similarly, he was not up to the task of life, routinely facing it drunk. Ruthlessly and carelessly he threw his wife and life away. At one point, the narrator notes how Grigorii Petrov finally comes to this realisation.

И токарь плачет. Ему не так жалко, как досадно. Он думает: как на этом свете все быстро делается! Не успело еще начаться его горе, как уж готова развязка. Не успел он пожить со старухой, высказать ей, пожалеть ее, как
Free from the numbness caused by his drinking, he expresses regret and guilt for his actions, presenting the human self that had been hidden under the influence of drink for forty years. Throughout the journey he proposes ways to make life better for him and his wife. But, like the relentless passing of time for Grigorii Petrov, the snow continues to fall and obstruct his way, the cold settles, and his wife dies. He loses consciousness on the journey. When he wakes in a large room, the doctor he sees informs him that his hands and feet were frostbitten and thus amputated. Chekhov firmly yet plausibly entrenches Grigorii Petrov in isolation, portraying him alone and lost against nature and describing his past as a life that he lost in drunkenness and that he cannot recover. For most of “Misery” Grigorii Petrov wants to rescue both his wife and his past. That they are irrecoverable and irremediable makes the present especially tormenting.

Chekhov presents a frightful story through Grigorii Petrov’s occasional asides and internal speech, as well as through the narrator’s remarks and descriptions of nature. A chief aspect of these techniques is that they emphasise lack of direction and indifference. Grigorii Petrov talks in broken sentences randomly, here addressing his wife who cannot respond, there voicing whatever thoughts occur to him. This lack of pattern expresses his agitation and parallels his journey. There is nobody listening; he is alone at that moment, as perhaps he made himself to be throughout his life. There is no beauty in the descriptions of the weather scenes, just relentless snow and cold that are as unforgiving as the emotions and thoughts that start to come to him. The only
sounds are of Grigorii Petrov’s voice and the knocking of his wife’s head against the sled. Both seem meaningless for they do not result from conscious effort and effect no response.

Like Tolstoy’s hero-narrator in “The Snowstorm,” Grigorii Petrov is lost, alone against nature. Like Garshin’s Ivanov in “Four Days” he is forced to contend also with his conscience. Yet, unlike both Tolstoy’s hero and Ivanov, Grigorii Petrov is unable to manage the storm or see any noble character in his past acts. He seems unworthy to continue life from both physical and ethical standpoints, as well as from an emotional one. Grigori Petrov’s chance for a new life is as distant as the possibility that he will regain his wife and their past.

Grigorii Petrov only appreciates what he had when he no longer has it. The stark reality of how he brought about this isolation hits him. Both the physical reality and his guilt-induced desire are his responsibility. The senses of loss and loneliness in him are heightened by this awareness, and glimpses of humanity appear in him. His punishment, so to speak, consists of these few hours of lone retribution for forty years of mistreating his wife and her life, and for discarding his own life’s potential. The suggestion that life can be unforgiving of one who squanders the chances life provides resounds throughout the story, most obviously in Grigorii Petrov’s lack of direction and lack of a past on which to support himself.

As the weather seemed to ignore Grigorii Petrov’s immediate needs in “Misery,” obstructing his path and increasing his discomfort, the snow that marks the opening scene in “Heartache” shows that nature, like man (potentially), is indifferent to the suffering that someone experiences. When “Heartache” opens, the central character, Iona Potapov, a cabby, seems frozen in time and space by the snowfall.
Chekhov balances the description of Iona and his immediate companion, giving three sentences each to Iona and the horse, identifying them and describing their snow cover in the first sentence; pointing out their stillness and the shape their bodies hold in the second; and, measuring the extent or reason for their stillness in the third. Chekhov separates the cabby and his horse from all others, hiding them under their blankets of snow, symbolically isolating them, and unites them by similarly describing them, anticipating their dependable union that closes the story. Even on the busy streets they seem alone: when they are taking a fare or moving about the streets, noises and shouts are directed at them, but not to engage them. On one hand, Chekhov weighs Iona’s need to share his feelings against the preference of others not to be bothered by other people’s thoughts and emotions. Except for when he is with his horse, Iona receives some measure of kinship only with a hunchbacked passenger (recall Iona’s hunched posture under the falling snow), who has been jostled out of a seat by his two friends. On the other, he measures the bustling crowds of the city streets alongside Iona’s loneliness. In the end, though, Iona perseveres. Grigorii Petrov could not find his way through the snow, but Iona can pull out from it when prompted, can find his way, and can soften the effect of his sadness.

Just before the opening of the story, Iona’s son died. Three times during the story Iona tries to tell others about the death and to share, if not ease, his grief.
the first two frustrated efforts to tell his passengers, he returns to the taxi yard, unable to bear his grief any longer. The narrator relays the question that Iona must wonder: «не найдется ли из этих тысяч людей хоть один, который выслушал бы его,» and responds as quickly, «Но толпы бегут, не замечая ни его, ни тоски...» (4: 329). He tries to talk to another cabby, who pulls his bedcover over his head. Finally he leaves to feed his horse and while doing this starts to tell the horse of his feelings. He does so and receives solace. The story ends on a positive note: Iona can endure and carry on with life, despite the loss and its trying repercussions. Again Chekhov isolates his hero by taking away someone dear. Iona lacks the guilt-laden baggage that Grigorii Petrov carries, and, while his physical isolation may remain a condition he cannot escape, he is able to alleviate the emotional pain that marks his desire.

In these stories loss is not excused or explained away as extraordinary. In fact, Chekhov subordinates the actual losing to the repercussions it effects. Loss resounds as different types of sadness. Gone, the message seems to be in “Heartache,” are those physical things that made life fuller or happier, but life goes on and adjustments must be made. Iona is not the cause of the loss, just its recipient. He finds a way to manage his sorrow and moments of insecurity. Grigorii Petrov feels he caused his loss and must contend with those feelings, too. His isolation continues as something more than physical loss. Not only must he endure the absence of his wife; he must deal also with his conscience.

These stories have a simple structure that places the central characters in isolation immediately. A death alters a character’s usual life, providing Chekhov with ample means to explore whether the character is able to endure both his separation from the past and his new surroundings. It is not a life-ending occurrence, Chekhov
suggests, but one that can produce hurtful feelings when burdened by conscience or accompanied by longing. Hope and sympathetic communication provide respite from the indifference seemingly shown by nature and people to obvious and unspoken needs of those who are isolated, respite from precisely those conditions that make enduring isolation a more lonely challenge. For these characters, isolation is their immediate existence, an existence that is amplified when the characters are forced to look to the world for comfort and support.

After Isolation

Isolation can define a character's past life experiences, revealing him in the present as one who is be unable to see the world outside the patterns and guidelines to which he has become used. Some of Chekhov's characters cannot break free from themselves. They live an isolated existence as they get on with their daily tasks, busily involved in their work and with no need, or no sense of how, to push outside this usual life. In "Verochka" (1887) and "An Attack of Nerves" [Припадок 1888], two longer stories, Chekhov depicts learned and thoughtful characters whose sheltered lives do not prepare them for life experiences.

At the end of "Verochka" the hero, Ognev, returns extremely late to the inn where he has been staying. As he unlocks the door, the Old Believer innkeeper lightly chastises Ognev, assuming that Ognev has been loafing about [шлят'ся] all evening. The innkeeper has no idea that on that evening Ognev has, perhaps, lost something

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41Rufus W. Mathewson, Jr. makes an instructive parallel between Riabovich ("The Kiss") and Gogol's Akakii Akakievich in his "Intimations of Mortality in Four Češov Stories," in American Contributions to the Sixth International Congress of Slavists. Volume II: Literary Contributions, William E. Harkins, ed. (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1968), 265. See also Bitsilli 175.
precious [ochen' dorogoe] and dear [blizkoe] that he would never find again (6: 80).

Whether or not the innkeeper knows of Ognev's loss makes no difference to the action of the story. But the scene neatly echoes a theme that appears in the story, unawareness, a theme that develops chiefly from the depiction of Ognev's isolated life.

Ognev finds himself (at a moment that he believes to be a final farewell) having to respond to a declaration of love from the story's title character. Unprepared for the sudden declaration -- he did not recognise any signs of Vera's feelings and has never considered such an eventuality either with Vera or anyone else -- Ognev believes that he muddles the moment, uncertain of the opportunity it presents to him and unaware of the importance it holds for Vera: «Эти слова, простые и обыкновенные, были сказаны простым человеческим языком, но Огнев в сильном смущении отвернулся от Веры, поднялся и вслед за смущением почувствовал испуг» (6: 77). He is unsure whether he loves her because he does not know how love should feel. He does not know how to respond, even to comfort her. Vera returns home. Later, Ognev goes to the house, but stays outside and does not contact Vera. After a few moments he leaves the house for the second time that day. This time he carries sadly with him thoughts of what might have been.\(^42\) When he left that morning for the first time he revelled simply in his thoughts of what had passed.

In the isolated life he lived before coming to the country and meeting Vera and her father, Ognev acquired the conditioning that he cannot overcome. Indeed, such an experience as walking in the country on a misty night is new for him: «Весь мир,

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\(^{42}\)Discussing the significance of time in "Verochka," Bitsilli reminds us that the entire story is a recollection and points out that "[t]he motif of the missed and irretrievable moment lies at the center of 'Verochka'" (Bitsilli 135).
казалось, состоял только из черных силуэтов и бродивших белых теней, а Огнев, наблюдавший туман в лунный августовский вечер чуть ли не первый раз в жизни, думал, что он видит не природу, а декорацию,...» (6: 71). Before Vera declares her love to Ognev, hints such as «Огневу, который на своем веку мало видел женщин, она [Вера] казалась красивией» (6: 72 -- my emphasis) and more blatant points, such as the one made when Ognev admits to Vera, «Живу я на свете 29 лет, но у меня в жизни ни разу романа не было. Во всю жизнь ни одной романической истории, так что с рандеву, с аллеями вздохов и поцелуями я знаком только понаслышке» (6: 73), explain that he could not know how to respond to Vera. He lacks this experience, he clarifies, «всю жизнь некогда было, а может быть, просто встречаться не приходилось с такими женщинами, которые... Вообще у меня мало знакомых, и я нигде не бывало» (6: 73). He knows he is a recluse, that he is «непривычный к движениям и людям» (6: 74), and that the elements of his particularly secluded life have always seemed prejudiced [уегда казалі своїми предрассудком]. He is not willing to give up his life, however. The next morning he will leave to see his mother in Orel before returning to his work routine in Petersburg. More generally, he accepts -- with almost analytical appreciation -- that human relations are fleeting (6: 70-71), and moves on.

When Ognev tries to determine the cause of his ineptitude [неумение дерзать себя] before Vera, he proposes that his inability is a type of coldness within him that expresses his «бессильие души, неспособность воспринимать глубоко красоту, ранняя старость, приобретенная путем воспитания, беспорядочной борьбы из-за куска хлеба, номерной бессемейной жизни» (6: 80). He speaks not of a coldness that is biting and
actively harmful, but of a lack of vitality that belies his name. Even as he stands below Vera's window he cannot muster the energies to feel for her. He assumes he has the capacity to feel, and acknowledges that that capacity remains undeveloped. Despite his having responded sincerely, he senses that he ought to have felt moved by Vera:

«Стараясь возбудить себя, он глядел на красивый стан Верочки, на ее косу и следы, которые оставляли на пыльной дороге ее маленькие ножки, припоминал ее слова и слезы, но всё это только умиляло, но не раздражало его душу» (6: 79). The lack of this development in him keeps him from taking part in the relationship with Vera at a different level.

Ognev's inexperience, to his mind, formed another difficulty for him. He feels he has caused Vera to suffer. This thought is particularly troubling because he did not realise, at the moment, how to act otherwise.

Первый раз в жизни ему приходилось убедиться на опыте, как мало зависит человек от своей доброй воли, и испытать на себе самом положение порядочного и сердечного человека, против воли причиняющего своему ближнему жестокие, незаслуженные страдания (6: 80).

He believes that he turned down Vera clumsily [neukliuzhe] and crudely [toporno], that his actions were unpolished. Thus, Ognev is convinced that he has not acquired the inner sensitivity and outer grace that the moment demanded.

In "Verochka" Ognev's limited experiences in his isolated past reduce his options for action in the present. As quickly as events present Ognev with the possibility of sharing his life with the young heroine, Vera, so too the possibility disappears when it is not acted upon. When opportunity arises, he is not sure how to respond. Chekhov draws attention to Ognev's natural inexperience, inhibitions, uncertainty and inability

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42The Russian adjective ognevoi [огневой] can be rendered by the English “fiery.”
to express himself differently. Instead of using a declaration of love to focus on what has built up in the central character, Chekhov uses that declaration to reveal what that hero does not seem to possess. To apply Donald Rayfield’s point, Ognev lacks any indication that a life with Vera is one to which he should commit himself. Without this indication he does not try to break from his isolation.

In “An Attack of Nerves” [Припадок 1889], the hero’s life in isolation keeps him from hardening his sensibilities and, thus, leaves him open for an emotionally painful encounter when he ventures out on a new experience. Unlike Ognev, who seems insensitive, Vasilev, the hero of “An Attack of Nerves,” is, perhaps, too sensitive.

The story was a commissioned work. When Garshin died, Chekhov was asked to write a piece for one of the publications that was being compiled in memory of Garshin. As he explained in a letter to Pleshcheev, who was one of the memorial volumes’ compilers, Chekhov chose for his story’s hero a young man of Garshin’s ferment [zakuaska], an exceptional [nediuzhinnyi] man who is pure [chestnyi] and extremely sensitive [gluboko ehutkii], and portrays his first visit to a brothel. Chekhov’s choice had two direct outcomes, at least. By choosing this particular hero, Chekhov made the story fit a Garshin collection. In addition, as Simon Karlinsky rightly observes, Chekhov made his portrayal of brothels “more objective and more poignant by showing it through the eyes of an inexperienced and painfully sensitive young university student.”

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44Hahn 68.

45Chekhov, Pis’ma, 2: 331 (15 September 1888).

inexperience and sensitivity -- that result from the isolated life Vasilev had lived to that point. Vasilev's encounter with the brothels challenges his mental images of that life, affects him physically, and finally overcomes him psychologically, testing his mettle in the midst of a world he does not know. All the time, Vasilev's reactions are laid bare for comparison to his friends' actions.

When first asked to join his friends on their evening tour through the brothel district, Vasilev would not go. Finally he decides to join his two friends. The evening presents circumstances that are new to Vasilev, but ones he thought he knew and understood from books, and with which he believed he could contend. The seedy reality he encounters dashes his expectations, and he reacts with extreme disillusionment which gives way to a nervous breakdown. The story progresses through the onset of his breakdown as his idealised pictures of brothels are challenged by a number of visits to real brothels. Vasilev does not avail himself of any woman's services, but each subsequent visit horrifies him more than the previous one, tainting his images and revealing his lack of understanding. His growing realisation that he knows nothing of this particular world affects him intellectually, physically, and finally overtakes him psychologically and emotionally.

The story's opening section (there are seven marked sections) makes vividly clear just how little Vasilev knows about brothels. The section is framed by two descriptions of how Vasilev perceives prostitutes and brothel life:

Падших женщин он знал только наслышке и из книг, и в тех домах, где они живут, не был ни разу в жизни. Он знал, что есть такие безнравственные женщины, которые под давлением роковых обстоятельств -- среды, дурного воспитания, нужды и т. п. вынуждены бывать продавать за деньги свою честь. Они не знают чистой любви, не имеют детей, не правоспособны; матери и сестры оплакивают их, как мертвых, наука третирует их, как зло, мужчины говорят им ты. Но, несмотря на всё это,
The descriptive expression *fallen women* [padshie zhenshchiny] and the suggestion that the women were brought to their new circumstances by a particular force [*pod davleniem*] -- fatal circumstances -- suggest Vasilev's sympathy for the women. He idealises their situation as being one against which they could not defend themselves. Yet, as Joseph Conrad has suggested, Vasilev's suppositions are coloured also by a hint of condemnation. In his description of what the women have fallen into -- they know nothing of pure love, their mothers and sisters weep over them as though they were dead, science dismisses them as an evil, men address them with contemptuous familiarity -- Vasilev distinguishes the women from the rest of society, cutting them off on the basis of love, feminine ideals and social divisions. Both images, however, are constructed from what he has read and hearsay, the knowledge he acquired in isolation.

While they repeatedly emphasise Vasilev's naivete, these descriptions also serve to build suspense as the young men's encounter with the brothels draws nearer. Indeed, to present the first encounter (and start the story's second section), Chekhov opposes sentences that contrast Vasilev's ignorance with reality, heightening the sense of disparity between the two and emphasising Vasilev's feelings of surprise:

The clash of Vasilev's vision of dark passages and rooms with the reality of brightness and high-spirited sounds is foregrounded against the seeming indifference of those who regularly use that street: «Ивозчики сидели на козлах так же покойно и равнодушно, как и во всех переулках; по тротуарам шли такие же прохожие, как и на других улицах. Никто не торопился, никто не прятал в воротник своего лица, никто не покачивал укоризненно головой» (7: 203). Very little resembles what he had expected.

By the time the young men have visited the eighth brothel, Vasilev's curiosity and ideal images have been suppressed by his realisation that there is nothing special or redeeming about these places or the women. He concludes that the bright and jocular appearance of the brothels and women is merely a disguise for cheapness and presents to him something he could never have imagined: «Ему казалось, что он видит не падших женщин, а какой-то другой, совершенно особый мир, ему чуждый и непонятный; если бы раньше он увидел этот мир в театре на сцене или прочел бы о нем в книге, то он не поверил бы...» (7: 208). His isolated life is being challenged. Although Vasilev no longer becomes surprised by what he sees -- no longer responds mentally to the brothels -- eventually, his body starts to respond to the repulsion his encounters create and to direct his actions: «Ему уж казалось душно и жарко, и сердце начинало биться медленно, но сильно, как молот: раз!-два!-три! -- Пойдем отсюда! -- сказал он, дернув художника за рукав (7: 207).

On their last visit, a marked change occurs in Vasilev. He becomes tormented by
the unforgiving tone of his own conclusions, and his reactions to the real world overtake his usual image of himself. He seems to be losing control. This awareness also is announced by a physical response:

У Васильева стучало сердце и горело лицо. Ему было и стыдно перед гостями за свое присутствие здесь, и гадко, и мучительно. Его мучила мысль, что он, порядочный и любящий человек (таким он до сих пор считал себя), ненавидит этих женщин и ничего не чувствует к ним, кроме отвращения (7: 209).

No longer does he simply find himself encountering and reacting to new experiences. This realisation affects him more than the reality he sees before him. It causes him to look more intently at the women in search of some indication of his ideal image of them. But he cannot find one. Vasilev finds himself unworthy, for he has stopped seeing the women as human beings. They are no longer fallen women; they are no longer women at all. Questions and lost hopes play at his conscience uncontrollably, for he cannot defend himself from them.

His final effort to see humanity in one of the prostitutes ends painfully for him. While at the last brothel, Vasilev hears a woman’s weeping in a neighbouring room. A man had slapped her. Vasilev rushes to the room, but his expectation that he would find usual human suffering is crushed when he learns that the crying prostitute is drunk. Horrified, he runs out of the building. His reaction is unlike that of his friends, who follow him out: one walks quietly, looking for Vasilev, while the other is pushed from the building as he shouts in disapproval about the prostitute’s being hit. Vasilev’s extreme response to what happened is spurred on by his belief that only he sees something wrong in these circumstances. Yet, from the start of the evening, Vasilev has expressed that he is different from his friends. It might be argued that it was the hope of overcoming some of this difference that lured him out of his usual
isolation on that night.

Vasilev holds his friends in regard. He admires and envies their self-confidence and their zest for life, and wishes he could break away from himself: «Н ему захотелось хоть один вечер пожить так, как живут друзья, развернуться, освободить себя от собственного контроля» (7: 200, 202). He recognises their ability to confront the world head-on. Before their last visit to a brothel, Vasilev hears how one friend was able to gain a few moments of conversation from one of the women, and notes this achievement as a measure of their difference:

«Однако же, вот он сумел выпить у своей дамы ее роман, -- подумал Васильев про медика. -- А я не умею...» -- Господи, я ухожу домой! -- сказал он.
-- Почему?
-- Потому, что я не умею держать себя здесь. К тому же мне скучно и противно. Что тут веселого? (7: 208).

The comparison of his reactions to his friends' ability to engage the evenings' events emphasises Vasilev's inexperience in the world and explains his sensitivity. Isolation had allowed him to hold onto his ideals, but it had not prepared him for what he would encounter that evening. «Он многое не понял в домах, души погибающих женщин остались для него по-прежнему тайной, но для него ясно было, что дело гораздо хуже, чем можно было думать. [...] Это были не погибающие, а уже погибшие» (7: 212). Both what he sees and the resulting actions of his conscience attack his sensibilities.

Finally, at home -- in his usual, isolated hideaway -- Vasilev is challenged by the need to find a solution to the problems he witnessed that evening. When he tries logically to determine a solution -- to save the women or save the men -- he realises the impossibility of such a task and is overcome by mental anguish, a state he knows from
past experience. («Начинается у меня, -- думал он. -- Припадок начинается...» (7: 214).) Life becomes too much for him. His feelings of responsibility are heightened, his sense of understanding is crushed, his feeling that he is capable of changing the world is numbed, and he believes that he is alone in his effort. «Диссертация, отличное сочинение, уже написанное им, любимые люди, спасение погибающих женщин -- всё то, что вчера еще он любил или к чему был равнодушен, теперь при воспоминании раздражало его ... » (7: 217). Vasilev's thoughts capture the transformation that has taken place in him over the course of that night. His vision, his confidence, his sense of place in the world are deflated. Neither do his friends follow his lead or train of thought, nor does what he has learned from books help him through his crisis.\(^{18}\) The attitudes he clings to and the relations he has created cannot support him emotionally. His isolated life prepared him for none of this.

The magnitude of the circumstances that Ognev and Vasilev face is plainly evident. They confront happenings they have never met physically or mentally. These unexpected situations challenge the characters' resourcefulness and fortitude, displaying their readiness for a new life experience. Each new experience measures the character's lone effort to cope with, and his movement into, the greater world. But the characters either do not have the knowledge to realise the potential of this encounter or have

\(^{18}\) "At the moment of a clash with life, there occurs a collapse of both the scientific and religious world-view of Vasilev. All his a priori concepts and ideas become displaced: the prostitutes whom he encounters in the brothels do not have anything in common with those fallen women about whom he has read in the Gospels. Scientific methods of problem solving ... turn out to be powerless to improve the world. Finally he -- who considers himself a Christian, a loving person, who views the world from the heights of evangelical morality -- he comes to feel hatred and becomes incapable of putting his Christian ideals into practice." See Marena Senderovich, "The Symbolic Structure of Chekhov's Story 'An Attack of Nerves,'" in Chekhov's Art of Writing, Paul Debreceny, ed. (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1977), 26. Quoted in Julie W. de Sherbinin, Chekhov and Russian Religious Culture: The Poetics of the Marian Paradigm (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 86-87.
"faulty tools" with which to face the opportunity: Ognev cannot find the necessary feelings, words or actions within himself and Vasilev succumbs. With nothing useful to brace themselves during these unplanned occurrences, they fall back on, or are forced back to, the solitary lives they know. This being said, however, the stories are about the nervous excitement that new experiences create. Certainly, isolation describes the usual, lonely, yet secure, existence to which the two characters became accustomed and accounts for why one character can lack appreciation for a delicate moment while another lacks hardened recognition of a social ill. But the feelings that conquer their usual thoughts during their nervous excitement separate them for those moments from that existence, causing them to feel and act differently. Isolation reflects the security of, and withdrawal into, the usual, as well as the alternative, if brief, sense of being alone in the throes of a new encounter. And the characters remain on the periphery of the world that others share. For the stories, the conditions are inseparable.

In the Chekhov stories I have discussed so far, some force is introduced that has the power to restrain the characters from attaining a plausibly fuller life. Whether it is the self-centredness of Aleksei Biriukov or the official bias of the "fat man," the prejudicial treatment shown to Pasha by Kolpakov and his wife or the fanatical purpose of Prishibeev, the pent-up sorrow brought to Iona by his attempts to speak of his son's death or the incapacity to know whether he loves that overcomes Ognev, it is with this force that each character must interact to avert isolation and reach for the individual potential or simple resolution extended by the events of the story. In its various forms, the circumstances of isolation offer Chekhov the means to examine more particularly a character's individual will and ability to free himself from the potential grips of physical, psychological, and social isolation, as well as what brings about a character's
self-imposed or received isolation. In the simple and usual details of such confrontations, Chekhov touches on the fortuitous, but likely moments that challenge this freedom, a fragile freedom that can as readily be claimed as taken away. The common occurrence of isolation in Chekhov's writing and the variety of character-types and settings to which he connects isolation raise two points: Chekhov understood isolation to be a defining feature of each individual's existence, a condition that often occurred in the midst of other people. Certainly, by the late 1880s the condition was appearing in as diverse a collection of his works as the play Ivanov [1887], the short story "I'm Sleepy" [Спать хочется 1888], and his longer prose work "A Dreary Story." A reading of this last work comprises the last section of this chapter.

"A Dreary Story"

In a response to Suvorin's immediate reading of "A Dreary Story," Chekhov allowed a guarded view of the goal that directed his writing that work, the substance of which hints at Chekhov's efforts to indicate the enclosed world of his story's hero, as well as the hero's tendencies to judge or not to act with understanding, and his incapacities:

Чехов, в Михаиле Ивановиче, видел человека, который был не только дружен с жизнью и счастливым, но и понимающим, и мыслил о всех по-христиански, волей-неволей признавал, как раб, и бранит людей даже в те минуты, когда принуждает себя отзываться о них хорошо. Хоть не выходить...49

Chekhov's brief description indicates features that define conditions of isolation that have appeared previously in his stories. Moreover, in "A Dreary Story" Nikolai

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49Again, see Chekhov, Pis'ma, 3: 266 (17 October 1889).
Stepanovich will experience loss and physical relocation. Except for revealing the need to regard the kindness and intelligence of the story's hero, Chekhov depicts his hero as one who is isolated and who continues to isolate himself, despite his intentions. His first-person narration reveals all this.

Nikolai Stepanovich is a sixty-two year old well-known professor who has recently discovered that he may not live past the next six months. His physical and mental stamina, as well as any patience he once had with life around him, slowly give way to irritability and wondering. He has a wife, Varia, a son away in a Warsaw regiment, and a 22-year-old daughter, Liza, who studies at the Conservatory and who is being courted by a young man with an unknown past, Gnekker. Closer to Nikolai Stepanovich than any of his family members is his twenty-five year-old ward, Katia. The story, as the subtitle announces, is formed by the notes of Nikolai Stepanovich and consists of what he records from his daily routine, his encounters, thoughts and feelings over the course of some three months. They present to us and to him his immediate, yet struggling, interaction with the world. "Describing his life," writes Rufus Mathewson of Nikolai Stepanovich, "he destroys it retroactively by uncovering the full extent of its emptiness," an emptiness that Nikolai Stepanovich does not immediately recognise.50

The story is presented in six parts and moves from depicting what is familiar to what is unfamiliar in Nikolai Stepanovich's life. Spatially, as the story proceeds, Nikolai Stepanovich is separated from his everyday surroundings to somewhere very temporary. The settings shift, approximately, from the university where he works, to his home, to Katia's, to a summer cottage, and finally to a room in an inn in Kharkov.

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The familiarity of activities in the story’s first parts is emphasised by Nikolai Stepovich’s use of such adverbs as customarily [po obychaiu], usually [obychno, po obyknoveniiu], often [chasto], and always [usegda], and subordinate clauses introduced by when [kogda] (in the sense of while or whenever). Temporally, the story’s first half comprises a single day, revealing in general what happens to Nikolai Stepovich of a day and thus implying his routine. This “typical picture” is of a day when Nikolai Stepovich is still working, but describes, most likely, his average working day over the past twenty years. The later parts of the story maintain use of present-tense verbs to describe the day’s actions, but by the end of the third part the mix of generalisations sprinkled with new events gives way to more regular comments on new events, as well as occasional musings. The fourth part starts a season later, when Nikolai Stepovich is no longer working, and in its opening line announces change: «Наступает лето, и жизнь меняется» (7: 291). The story’s most obvious constituents, then, indicate the likelihood of Nikolai Stepovich’s isolation: Nikolai Stepovich is physically and temporally separated from the usual. This separation occurs when he retires from work and thus loses a chief cause of his usual habits for the past twenty to thirty years. But the essence of his isolation appears more particularly from his attitudes.

Two understandings highlight Nikolai Stepovich’s attitudes as they emerge in these “notes.” The first concerns judgment and the second describes what, to Nikolai Stepovich’s mind, man must do to be independent in the world.

In parts II and III, respectively, Nikolai Stepovich and Katia comment on how he sees his participation in the world. The statements may seem unrelated at first

glance, but his manner of judgment creates a significant link. The first quote is Nikolai Stepanovich’s. In comparison to images from the past, he observes change in his wife and daughter but feels that he has passed through time unscathed.

The second quote is Katia’s. She forcefully suggests, “Просто у вас открылись глаза; вот и все. Вы увидели то, чего раньше почему-то не хотели замечать” (7: 282). She raises a point that Nikolai Stepanovich has mentioned moments earlier, that new feelings rising in him may result from his seeing anew, from his having been blind [slep] before and, therefore, apathetic [ravnodushen]. In fact, what Katia infers echoes his wife’s suggestion earlier the same day that he pretends he does not see anything (7: 279). He responds firmly to these three proposals. He ignores his wife. He later discards the same idea as his own interpretation. And, lastly, he describes Katia’s comment as nonsense [neleposti].

There is a contradiction here. Yet he does not see it. Nikolai Stepanovich is claiming an ability to guard himself from, as he views them, destructive elements, things, he acknowledges, but from which he protects, hardens, himself [zakalil sebia]. But when Katia suggests, in essence, the same thing in the second quote -- that he saw selectively -- he brushes it aside. Katia does not accuse him of having closed his eyes actively and knowingly to what he did not want to see, but seems to imply it with her final words: you didn’t want to notice [ne khoteli zamechat’]. Both Nikolai Stepanovich’s observation and Katia’s constructive suggestion of his “not wanting to notice” imply a form of protection, yet taken further might suggest as different
concepts as self-preservation and evasion, either of which can be noble or greedy, depending on context.

For that context it is helpful to back up in the story to the exchange that leads to Katia's comment. The exchange takes place at Katia's home and has been prompted by Nikolai Stepanovich. Considering Katia's conclusions that he didn't want to notice, Nikolai Stepanovich's words that lead into her statement are pointed. He opens the discussion with the following:

“Конечно же, я никогда не судил. Я никогда не судил, был снисходителен, охотно прощал всех направо и налево. [...] В мою жизнь я старался только о том, чтобы мое общество было выносимо для семьи, студентов, товарищей, для прислуги (7: 281-282).

“I've never judged,” he says, “Я никогда не судил”. This assured statement jumps from the page. After all, who has never judged? He may convince himself that he has not attacked someone in his company with words that judge, but actions can be a form of judgment, too. Did Nikolai Stepanovich actively give way, nobly stand back? Or, did he not judge because he was never really taking part, was never entering the contest, because he never had an opinion? In fact, he certainly does have opinions; he judges people, art, buildings and things that happen around him. But, perhaps it does not matter. Whichever conclusion might be most accurate, what does stand out is that he felt that he enjoyed the right of not taking part, or as he words it, of pardon, of forgiveness [pomilovanie]. By his own admission, he was there in stature, in position, in title, in name and in the body that holds in all these things, and was not there as an equal participant. He may have engaged the ideas but did not interact at a human level. In fact he did judge, he did make decisions and removed himself, isolated his participation. He chose not to take part in common human activities. He had complete
control and held it over his context and those of others. He chooses to make his company [obshchestvo] pleasing, not his self, his full human being. And here is the crux of the matter: he comes to Katia explaining that he is losing the ability to control. He continues the second quote, «Но теперь уж я не король. Во мне происходит нечто такое, что прилично только рабам» (7: 282). The contrast he chooses is telling. The movement from king to slave, from being fully alive to facing death, is announced by a loss of ability to control his thoughts and actions, a foremost sign of which is that he can no longer not want to notice. Because of his sickness (and age) he cannot work, cannot control his body, and cannot control fully what happens around him. He does not like change or the idea of change. Figuratively, his “kingliness,” his ability to control, has succumbed to his being slavishly at the beckon of other forces. Now, he must see the world that is actually around him. This puts him in an awkward situation since he has become unused to engaging the everyday activities that happen outside his work, but that are connected to his life.

The second understanding that defines Nikolai Stepanovich’s attitude is more pragmatic. Nikolai Stepanovich is not sympathetic to people who play parts, allow themselves to settle into mediocrity or ignore the chance to express their independence. Everything -- people, literature, theatre -- lacks worth if it cannot overcome the conditions in which it is set. To be themselves, to keep from easing into mediocrity or to express their individuality, Nikolai Stepanovich believes, people need to conquer nature and self. Science, he believes, provides the means to this end.
This is as close as Nikolai Stepanovich comes to explaining why he was bound to the particular “busy-ness” of his career. Either it attracted him more than any other aspect of life or he chose not to free himself from its stimulating grip. This logic, this “conquering sensibility” raised also in the king-slave comparison, finds its way into many of Nikolai Stepanovich’s opinions.

Moreover, this passage states a belief and does not explain it. What is explained is the steadfastness of this belief. It is firm, unwavering. This passage is an account of twenty to thirty years of Nikolai Stepanovich’s life. It is, potentially, a passage that defines and distances Nikolai Stepanovich. There is indication of conscience, love and guilt -- certainly human states and maybe even moral senses -- but no reflection on interaction with other beings. This belief is inward looking and related only to himself. It explains both how he interacts with the world and why he isolates himself from it.

As theoretical premises these two understandings -- controlling the moment and expressing individuality (that is, the individual ability to conquer oneself and nature) -- represent a formula for self-fulfilment and self-isolation. In neither explanation does he see the possibility for, perhaps, less praiseworthy results, even though he appears to see such results in others who have found similarly attractive ways to channel their energies. Of his dissector [prozektor], Petr Ignatevich, he notes: «Работает он от утра до ночи, читает массу, отлично помнит всё прочитанное -- и в этом отношении он не человек, а золото; [...] вне своей специальности он наивен, как ребенок» (7: 260). As when he brushes aside other suggestions of weaknesses in his conduct -- that he is blind or indifferent to aspects of his interaction with others -- Nikolai Stepanovich does not
entertain the possibility that any trait that he sees in Petr Ignatevich might resemble such a feature in himself. They are proven patterns for individual rule and imply immediate responsibility to oneself alone. Nikolai Stepanovich has reason to believe in his directives. He enacted them, found self-satisfaction and, in directing his efforts wholeheartedly, earned the regard of others.

From the opening of the story Nikolai Stepanovich indicates that he, or at least his name, has earned special significance. To his mind, though, others and their good thoughts of Nikolai Stepanovich’s work establish the stature of his name based on his diligence and fine results. Alone, this select application of his energies defines his life, and he is willing to accept the reverence and keep the routine. This limiting acceptance cuts him off from other aspects of life by providing his choice with a particular sense of integrity and order of priorities that revolves around his work. And his usual working routine comes to define his whole existence.

He knows he made adjustments to attend to this routine and, indirectly, establish his prominence. He notes one instance, sitting at lunch and looking at his wife and daughter, and thinking «[п]роизошла в обеих резкая переменя, я прозеял тот долгий процесс, по которому эта переменя совершалась, и не мудрено, что я ничего не понимаю» (7: 278). And of Katia he writes «[з]аниматься ее воспитанием было мне

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52 From the literary manners that Nikolai Stepanovich effects in the opening paragraph, “we realize that Chekhov is not calling into question the fact that the narrator is a man of extraordinary capabilities,” notes Peter Hodgson in his “Metaliterature: An Excerpt from the Anatomy of a Chekhovian Narrator,” Pacific Coast Philology vol. VII (April 1972), 38.

53 Nikolai Stepanovich implies in the opening paragraph not that he has settled into a solitary lifestyle, but into a particular one. Speaking of himself playfully in the third person, he writes: «Знакомство у него самое аристократическое; по крайней мере за последние 25-30 лет в России нет и не было такого знаменитого ученого, с которым он не был бы коротко знаком.» (7: 251).
некогда, наблюдал я ее только урывками, и потому о детстве ее могу сказать очень немного» (7: 268). His justifications are sound, unemotional explanations for the passing of time, but also, they reveal no clear sense of the feelings that these three women hold for him.

By his action and advice Nikolai Stepanovich proposes a programme for holding one's own position and expressing independence. This sense of ordinary activity provides tools for successful work results and polite, if sterile, company. Considered together, his theoretical suggestions, advice and practices reveal Nikolai Stepanovich during his work years as most often a focused man who, except for seemingly obligatory, brief social appearances, actively separates himself from family, physically, intellectually and through manners. He controls each situation and has been able to maintain this up to the onset of his ailment. In addition, Nikolai Stepanovich's judgments and opinions on control are validated by his work ethic, by that life dominated by his public action and its reception. His ailment challenges the continuation of this life. As he struggles to maintain his previous ways, the realisation of the change he is undergoing shifts his focus from a public to a private one. His growing limitations reduce his functions and professional usefulness, removing him from work and placing him at home, where everyday activities have continued without his active participation, even influence, for some thirty years. The results of this inaction show themselves most clearly when Nikolai Stepanovich is called upon to take part in family matters.

On a few occasions, Nikolai Stepanovich makes direct allusions which contrast the present with the past. The more fondly remembered time is the past, a time when actions were performed spontaneously, when he was in far better health, or when
feelings and tolerance for a situation were less likely to summon the animosity they now tend to raise.

Nikolai Stepanovich makes temporal juxtapositions clear, often prefacing what happened previously with *previously* [prezhde] and what occurs in the present with *now* [teper']. Such clarifications reveal that from his viewpoint very little of everyday home life has, in fact, changed, but that he is noticing its details. He now sees his morning greeting to his daughter, the "hello" he has used since her childhood, as a phatic and ineffectual performance (7: 256). He is aware of the trite repetition of this routine episode, but does not know how else to greet her -- a fact that might propose that Nikolai Stepanovich has not continued to exercise his capacity to relate with his daughter, consequently creating a gap of twenty-thirty years in the growth of that aspect of his being. Except for his morning ditty -- «Сливочный... фисташковый... лимонный... » (7: 256) -- he does not know what else to say. He cannot relate to her for he has stopped attending to their relationship. He believes that at one time he was as involved with his family as he was with his work. There was a time when two worlds -- private and public, family and science -- to his mind, coexisted and together made life happy. At one point he had a collection of relationships. But he chose to continue only certain ones, ones connected with his work. His inability to account for the passing of time, as revealed in the changes in his family, is both an inability to understand and an admission of his absence. While it may be that the actions of his wife, daughter and Katia do seem petty, they are strange to him specifically now. I am not sure that the juxtaposition of attitudes is as significant as the fact that he *now* notices these different manners. His family members' actions are part of their usual lives, part of the things they have done for a while, but are only apparent to him now that he has lost his ability
not to notice, now that he must be a part of their usual lives. More significantly, not only are these actions strange to him, but the actions that they ask of him, including conventional fatherly demands, are foreign, too. He cannot respond to them because he is not conditioned to respond.  

Consider three scenes. In part IV Nikolai Stepanovich recounts looking from the window of his summer cottage. "Часто я любуюсь, как какие-то мальчик и девочка, оба белокурые и оборванные, карабкаются на палисадник и смеются над моей лысиной. В их блестящих глазенках я читаю: "гряди, плеший!" Это едва ли не единственные люди, которыми нет никакого дела ни до моей известности, ни до чина" (7: 294). Nikolai Stepanovich acknowledges that there are no expectations in the relationship between him and the children and implies that this absence allows it to be natural, as perhaps was the intimacy he shared with his daughter twenty years earlier. He sees their childish fun for what it is. It requires little of him other than his presence at the window. It can be pleasing for him when there is nothing for him to do. There is, it appears, a mutual joy in the relationship that he seems intent to continue.

Compare two similar scenes. In part V, at a moment when Liza is unwell, she and her mother seek his support and care, yet he cannot provide them. Their sincere affection juxtaposes his inability to respond to Liza's needs when his wife prompts him to do something. He fumbles in response to her request. Prior to that, he chose not to act on hearing sounds from Liza's room. Before his wife calls him from his room to

help with Liza he hears something but is not sure if it is laughter or moaning. That he realises it might be moaning, yet still does not act, echoes Katia’s words “не хотели замечать” of his “not wanting to notice,” or comments forcefully on his not knowing what to do, despite noticing. No matter which interpretation is more accurate, the non-reaction begs asking whether this is the time for prudence or the right of a king to pardon, or is being ignorant in knowing what to do reason enough not to respond to moaning?

Compare also from the end of the story Katia’s request to Nikolai Stepanovich for direction. She cries to him: «Помогите! [...] Ведь вы мой отец, мой единственный друг! Ведь вы умны, образованны, долго жили! Вы были учителем! Говорите же: что мне делать?» (7: 309). By his conscience [Po sovesti], he utters, he does not know what she should do (and he offers her breakfast!). Apparently, he sees her actions for their honesty, but, equally, is unable to respond to them.

In both instances, the magnitude of the moment is lost on Nikolai Stepanovich. He can deliver no sign of concern or shared understanding. He either misjudges the meetings or, quite simply, does not know -- has not learned -- how to act. The moments demanded something, surely not nothing. That the two young women turn to him suggests they empower him with some responsibility. He is given two situations and is entreated to react to them, if not to control them. By not responding he fails to exercise this responsibility. In defence of Nikolai Stepanovich, he may not understand what to do now because he received no exposure to such circumstances. What he judged to be most important over the past twenty to thirty years kept him from knowing how to respond to instances like the two outlined above. He did not act because he could not act.
Chekhov makes clear that this story has a backgrounded theme about choices and their consequences. As a young woman Katia chose to pursue acting and left Nikolai Stepanovich and his family so she could work with a theatre. Liza, Nikolai Stepanovich’s daughter, chooses to sneak away with Gnekker. Nikolai Stepanovich, too, makes his choices and has to live by them. And because of them he is left alone, led and conditioned by his beliefs and judgments, isolated by the actions and insensibility they inspired in him. Unlike the situations Garshin portrays, Chekhov sees the potential for isolation in the most typical activities. Isolation emerges unexpectedly for Nikolai Stepanovich (but, perhaps, inevitably for the reader) from the activities and convictions developed during a successful professional life, at the end of which he is somewhat worn out, for the most part unbending, and to an extent not an active or effective family member.

In one sense, “A Dreary Story” is an accumulation of Chekhov’s efforts. Isolation receives different types of emphasis in Nikolai Stepanovich’s story, but types of emphasis that were part of Chekhov’s other stories of the 1880s. It refers to the inflexible view that guided Nikolai Stepanovich’s actions and choices during his working years and recalls the attitudes of Prishibeev and Aleksei. It takes on social meaning -- resembling biases seen in “A Chorus Girl” -- when Nikolai Stepanovich expresses his opinions about his wife and daughter or discusses literature and theatre performances. It brings on his feelings of loneliness and frustration when he can no longer work in a similar way to how it causes the feelings of frustration in Fedor Stepanych in the penal colony and loneliness in Iona. As it had for Grigorii Petrov, being in isolation causes Nikolai Stepanovich to wonder about how he became isolated. His isolated life spent focusing solely on his work accounted for his inability to mingle with others or attend to
fatherly duties. Such a limited life explains Ognev’s inexperience and Vasilev’s sensitivity, too.

More often than in his earliest works, examples of isolation in Chekhov’s writing of the 1880s occur in stories he published after 1885, that is, after he had received greater (but not full) license to write as he wished from Khudekov at Petersburg News (1885) and, more consequentially, Suvorin at New Time (1886). Eventually, the thick journals would receive Chekhov’s more substantial stories. Until the mid-1880s Chekhov rapidly produced such slight, stock pieces as stsenki, comic sketches, situational anecdotes, and satires, and some longer, acrid stories that lampoon the restricted views and mentality of buffoons and mock the circumstances and weaknesses of parents and spouses, civil servants and commoners, satisfying his editors, as well as the weeklies’ readers and censors. Many of these stories might be seen rightly as throw-away comic pieces, yet some of their character-types -- petty boors, such as the Fat Man and the Thin Man or Fedor Stepanych -- and scenarios of social and physical isolation anticipate what appears in Chekhov’s longer, dramatic and, generally, more developed later stories. In Chekhov’s more serious stories, such unassuming attributes as nonchalance or timidity (as appears in Iona), ignorance or blind routine (Ognev and Vasilev), as well as such brazen traits as pride or power (Kolpakov and his wife), greed (Aleksei) or callousness (Grigorii Petrov) cause a character to inhibit another or himself. Alternatively, in Chekhov’s more comical stories, misunderstandings and misjudged importance (Prishibeev) tend to affect a character’s view of the circumstances and cause him to try to control the moment. Such excessive action alienates others and isolates him.

Throughout the 1880s Chekhov applied or reworked various patterns of isolation
and conditions of loneliness, employing numerous characters and settings. By the time of "A Dreary Story," he was prepared to use a number of variations on isolation in that story alone. In these stories echoes the question of responsibility. I do not mean moral or social responsibility; rather, I have in mind a sense of responsibility in which each character is accountable to and for himself. I observed earlier that the circumstances and results of isolation offer Chekhov the means to examine more particularly a character’s individual will and ability to free himself from the potential grips of physical, psychological and social isolation, as well as what brings about a character’s self-imposed or received isolation. It is each character’s task, Chekhov seems to suggest, to deal alone with the aspect of isolation he faces. Indeed, no one is going to rescue Fedor Stepanych, Prishibeev, Pasha, Grigorii Petrov or Ognev. And, although one might be inclined to blame Aleksei and Nikolai Stepanovich for their own isolation, society for Iona’s, and Kolpakov and his wife for Pasha’s, this is not the point of the stories. Chekhov does not apologize for characters’ travails or applaud their fortitude. It is the reality of contending with isolation alone -- not the cause or result of such contending -- that often matters most.
Five: Korolenko, Isolation and Individual Expression

Biographical Sketch

Vladimir Galaktionovich Korolenko was born on 15 July 1853 in Zhitomir in Western Ukraine. Born to a Polish mother in a region where Polish and Ukranian were spoken as commonly as Russian, he acquired early fluency in all three languages. His father, a district magistrate, kept to himself, but from his actions Korolenko was able to formulate early understandings of how law and conscience might affect a man's actions. Korolenko's eventful childhood received an added dimension from current affairs. Some of his earliest recollections are flavoured by the spirit of change inspired by the emancipation and reforms of 1861 as well as the Polish uprising of 1863. His family moved to Rovno in 1866 where Korolenko attended high school [real'naia gimnaziia] and where his father died in 1868. He died before securing the substantial pension he had hoped for his family, and in short time their way of life transformed from one expected for a notable local civil servant to one of near poverty.

In 1871 Korolenko started studies at the St Petersburg Technological Institute, paying his way with earnings from such assorted odd jobs as draft drawing, colouring


2Korolenko, The History of My Contemporary, 3.
drawings for botanical atlases, and proof-reading. For all his efforts to survive under impoverished conditions, Korolenko spent little time at his studies. In addition, he found his first two years at the Institute disappointingly void of the excitement he had anticipated would fill student life. He decided to start afresh.

Korolenko moved to Moscow in 1874 to begin studying at the Petrovskii Academy of Agriculture and Forestry. The events that occurred at the Academy, both before and during his attendance, suggest that that place profoundly influenced the development of Korolenko's Populist outlook. It was on the grounds of this academy that the student Ivanov had been murdered in 1869, the event that sparked the "Nechaev affair." Here, too, Korolenko attended student Populist meetings and first read the writings of Bakunin, Tkachev, Lavrov and Mikhailovskii. Indeed Korolenko would later explain that his most important influence at that time was Lavrov: in his own socio-political outlook Korolenko felt that the intellectual must compensate the people for the debt he owed them. Yet, like Garshin's, Korolenko's views never took on a terrorist sympathy, but they did recognise the need for action. At the time, Korolenko took offence at the actions of the badgering school authorities who

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3Ibid., 161-165.

4S.G. Nechaev (1847-1882) was a violent revolutionary who hoped to link his group to a Europe-wide conspiratorial organisation. To express his power and "guarantee obedience by deliberately involving his fellow revolutionaries in a common crime," he and three others killed Ivanov on embellished grounds (James H. Billington, The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 398-399). See also Frank, Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865-1871, 399-402 especially.

5M.A. Bakunin (1814-1876), anarchist theoretician and revolutionary leader; P.N. Tkachev (1844-1886), populist theoretician and revolutionary; P.L. Lavrov (1823-1900), intellectual historian, theoretician of positivism, utilitarianism, and populism.

questioned students’ competence and maturity and monitored their every move. In 1876 he and two others submitted a student declaration to the director of the Academy in which they said as much. In response, the authorities arrested and exiled them. Korolenko was to be sent to Ust-Sysolsk in Vologda province. Along the way, however, he learned that the Governor of Vologda, an amiable man whom Korolenko had met earlier on his journey and who had learned from his sons (studying in St Petersburg) the reasons for Korolenko’s exile, showed Korolenko leniency and granted him the option of returning home to Zhitomir. Instead, Korolenko asked to be sent to Kronstadt to be near his mother and sister. This choice was permitted and Korolenko arrived in Kronstadt in April 1876.

He was freed from his somewhat carefree life under police surveillance in May 1877 and in the autumn moved to St Petersburg where he entered the Mining Institute. Almost immediately he looked for work, eventually finding jobs proof-reading, first for the weekly Economic Index and then for a small St Petersburg paper The News [Novosti]. As before, his need to work took him away from his studies. He did, however, have four key experiences that influenced his development. In November 1877 Korolenko attended the poet/publisher Nekrasov’s funeral. He heard Dostoevsky speak at the burial and followed Dostoevsky’s comments in A Writer’s Diary for December 1877, words that elaborated on Dostoevsky’s grave-side message and on his feelings for Nekrasov. Korolenko sensed in Dostoevsky’s words the writer’s belief that the time was near when Russia’s next great poet would appear from the people. In early 1878 Korolenko was in St Petersburg when a revolutionary, Vera Zasulich, in

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7Dostoevskii, Dnevnik pisatelia za 1877 god, 467-489 and Dostoevsky, A Writer’s Diary. Volume Two/1877-1881, 1245-1263.
response to the seemingly indiscriminate acts of corporal punishment being exercised by the authorities, shot and wounded General Trepov, the military governor of St Petersburg, an act for which she was later acquitted.\textsuperscript{8} Third, at meetings he was attending, Korolenko met Dusha Ivanovskaia, whom he married in 1886 when he returned from his final exile. Finally, Mezentsev, Chief of the Gendarmes, was murdered in August 1878. The authorities reacted by cracking down on suspected revolutionaries. Korolenko, his younger brother and a few others were interrogated when the police discovered they were housing Piankov, an accused player in the Zasulich trial who had also been acquitted but nonetheless exiled. Piankov had recently escaped from exile when he was found at Korolenko's. In the end, they were all released. It was around this time that Korolenko started to write journalistic reports and fiction, the first example of the latter being an autobiographical work “Episodes from a Seeker's Life” [Эпизоды из жизни «искателя»].\textsuperscript{9}

Korolenko did not escape the crackdown on Populist sympathisers that started in the late 1870s. He and his brother were exiled to the Viatka province in 1879. Following Aleksandr II's assassination in 1881 political prisoners were supposed to take an oath to Aleksandr III. Korolenko declined and was exiled to distant Siberia (Iakutia) from 1882 until 1885, a journey that would provide him with the materials for many stories.

In late January 1885 Korolenko returned from Siberia to Nizhnyi Novgorod. He remained there until the mid-1890s, after which he almost completely gave up writing

\textsuperscript{8}Trepov had ordered the flogging of a political prisoner (Riasanovsky 383).

\textsuperscript{9}Bialyi, V.G. Korolenko, 15. Bialyi notes that the piece was published in №7 (1879) of the journal The Word [Слово]. See also K.T. Tiun'kin's article "Vladimir Galaktionovich Korolenko (1853-1921)," that introduces Korolenko, SS, 5-6.
fiction. Shortly after his arrival to Nizhnyi Novgorod he published a number of stories that he had been working on through the early 1880s. They appeared in such thick journals as *The Word, Russian Thought* [Русская мысль] and *Northern Herald*, as well as in the newspapers *The Russian News* [Русские ведомости], *The Volga Herald* [Волжский вестник] and *The Siberia Gazette* [Сибирская газета]. In addition Korolenko wrote articles and reviews for these and other journals and newspapers. Through the late 1880s he came more and more into contact with the established literary community. Most famously, perhaps, Korolenko played an active part in influencing *Northern Herald*’s decision to invite Chekhov to submit a story to the journal.¹⁰ That story turned out to be “Steppe,” Chekhov’s first publication in the thick journals.

Biographies and transposed details from much of Korolenko’s fiction and his autobiographical “The History of My Contemporary” suggest that Korolenko’s first thirty-seven years (up to 1890) were eventful and entertaining, as well as demanding -- physically, mentally and emotionally. In their articles marking the centennial of Korolenko’s birth, R.F. Christian and P. Ershov observe that Korolenko met his hardships, particularly his exile, with fortitude, even open-mindedness, expressing an optimism that pervades his fictional writing.¹¹ Christian daringly suggests that

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"Korolenko had the faculty of transforming a political exile of what was for long an unknown duration into an unexpected holiday." With less detachment, Ershov explains that for Korolenko «[a]рест, ссылка в царское время не только не сломили его духа и его безупречной совести (ведь его и называли в те времена печатно "совестью современной России"), а закалили и "усосредоточили" идеюность, гуманность».

Despite their different tones, each summary comments positively on Korolenko’s ability to grasp the heartening potential of circumstances. Korolenko brought that message to his stories, often amplifying it with depictions of non-conformist characters who are unyieldingly protective of their independence and integrity. Alternatively, Korolenko’s stories give a wholly unfavourable impression of imposed isolation, especially when the decision to isolate or restrict hinges on an authority’s simplistic desire to make an individual accountable -- that is to say, when the whimsical exercising of power by the authorities is the chief factor that leads to the isolation. (For sure, such a scenario summons images of Korolenko’s last days at the Petrovskii Academy.) Such a tendency in his stories inspires a broad generalisation concerning Korolenko’s views of each man’s freedom and his role as an author: Korolenko saw the need to challenge and enhance man’s experiences and views, rather than inhibit or enclose them, as the authorities were wont to do.

Korolenko’s Fiction

Korolenko’s fiction gained broad popular appeal, in part because of its balanced quality of being instructive and entertaining. The directness with which his stories present their material reflects a simple strategy. His fictional narratives of the 1880s prompt readers’ curiosity with careful workings of time that generate stories of discovery and
suspense. In addition, his stories offer characterisations of colourful, but plausible individuals that express his sense of people's habits and speech, his knowledge of legends and history, and versions of his own memories and experiences. It should be noted that Korolenko's stories are sometimes loosely constructed and predictable. Critics agree, though, that the periodic lack of artistic tightness in Korolenko's prose is overcome by its candid ability to evoke the reader's interest and emotions.

Like Garshin, Chekhov and others in the 1880s, Korolenko experimented with a variety of narrative approaches, freely moving between stories told by first-person and third-person narrators, by educated pilgrims, burly drivers, backwoods peasants and children. Still, his narrators share characteristics. Commentators point to prominent aspects that recur in Korolenko's vision of fiction: his detailed descriptions of characters and settings, his tendency to draw on what he saw and learned in life for his "It can rightly be asked "Where does the dream start in "Makar's Dream" [Сон Макара 1885]?" or observed that there is never doubt that Petr, the title hero of "The Blind Musician" [Слепой музыкант 1886, 1898], will attain inner and musical freedom. In such stories Korolenko's priorities appear to be as pragmatic as they are artistic. Of the former story a sound case could be made that Korolenko wanted as much to convey a message, that ways of acting are influenced strongly by the circumstances that surround the actor, as to create his now legendary hero Makar. In the latter story, by his own admission, Korolenko "задался целью проследить душевную драму слепого" (2: 328), an achievement whose success would be measured by whether the story generated and advocated such responses as sympathy and hope.

* Korolenko reworked "The Blind Musician" between 1886 and 1898 when it appeared in its sixth edition. For Korolenko's reasons for the revisions, see his introduction to the sixth edition (2: 88-89).


14I have in mind narrators of the following stories: the educated pilgrim of "Behind the Icon" [За иконой 1887] and "Heavenly Birds" [Птицы небесные 1889], the coachman skaz narrator of "Killer" [Убийца 1885] and the elderly skaz narrator of ""The forest is murmuring"" [«Лес шумит» 1886]), and the child hero of "At Night" [Ночью 1888].
material, his regular reference to other literary models, his appreciation for what is unpredictable and instinctual, his paramount focus on nature, his repeated emphasis on conscience, his respect for history. During my discussion of isolation that follows, a number of these points will resurface and be more fully examined. For now, they provide a small, but studied consideration of the breadth of Korolenko’s prose.

As an example, an account voiced in the early pages of the story “Behind the Icon” exemplifies a number of these points and informs our understanding of Korolenko’s sense of fictional narrative in general. In that scene, the first-person narrator witnesses brief moments of interaction between his friend, Andrei Ivanych, and his friend’s wife, Matrena Stepanovna. Then the narrator becomes the topic of their conversation.

Так как в этой речи моего друга, хотя и снабженной столь многочисленными оговорками («по крайней мере», «как бы то ни было» и «все-таки»), дело, очевидно, идет обо мне, то, из понятного чувства скромности, я несколько удаляюсь от окна. Звуки супружеской перепалки усиливаются, но

Korolenko relied for his settings on circumstances he knew well, on the provincial town of his childhood, the Siberia of his exile, and on early impressions of his immediate post-exile time in Nizhny Novgorod. As a story from his childhood I have in mind “In Bad Company” [В дурном обществе 1885]. For stories set in Siberia, see “A Strange One” [Чудная 1880/1905], “Iashka” [Яшка 1881], “Killer” [Убийца 1885], “Makar’s Dream,” “The Escapee from Sokolin” [Соколинец 1885], *“The Circassian” [Черкес 1888]. For images taken from his Nizhny Novgorod period, see “Behind the Icon” and “Heavenly Birds.”

* I prefer “Escapee from Sakhalin,” the rendering of Sokolinets given by Michael Henry Heim and Simon Karlinsky (Chekhov, Letters, 90-91); however, I have tried to maintain the input of the story’s main character by rendering Sakhalin as Sokolin.

Attentive to the slightest details he hears and sees and emotionally calm in his unbiased account, the narrator maintains a courteous distance from his subject matter, presenting his observations very much like reportage. His courtesy suggests his conscientiousness and, when he backs away out of respect for their privacy, reflects the limits he places on what he wants to know and feels he needs to relate. He does not suppose what the outcome of the sounds and acts might be or filter what he sees and hears through his own convictions. To the chief trait of this passage -- the narrator's conscientious regard for the truth, and thus his priority on detail and non-judgmental description -- can be traced those more artistic aspects.

In his fiction of the 1880s Korolenko’s balanced portrayals of nature and character action recall the work of Turgenev, his sense of detail and affection for wanderers and outcasts recall the stories of Leskov, and his fictional efforts to “raise up the lowly” parallel closely the lead of Dostoevsky. Korolenko showed affinities in his stories with his predecessors and his contemporaries.17 Yet a “Korolenko attitude” to literature certainly exists in his stories, and it appealed both to general readers and the literati.18

17Near the end of his book on Korolenko Bialyi compares Korolenko’s writing to that of his predecessors (289-305) and his contemporaries, namely Garshin and Chekhov (305-322). On this particular trait in Dostoevsky’s writing, see Frank, Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, 1860-1865, 198-199.

18See, for instance, Chekhov’s letters to V. Bilibin (1 February 1886), Korolenko (9 January 1888), Pleshcheev (5 February 1888), Grigorovich (9 October 1888), and the remarks of Gorky, Korolenko’s younger colleague and one-time protege, in M. Gor’kii, “Iz vospominanii o V.G. Korolenko,” in Zhizn’ i literaturnoe tvorchestvo V.G. Korolenko. Sbornik statei i rechei k 65-letnemu iubeleiu (Petrograd: Kul’tura i svoboda, 1917): “Мне лично этот большой и красивый писатель сказал о русском народе многое, что до него никто не умел сказать. Он сказал это
Korolenko’s convictions and actions defined him as a model citizen, but that label was as fitting a description of Korolenko the author. Different from Garshin’s blatant fictional wonderings about social ills and Chekhov’s unflappable narratives about life’s happenings, Korolenko’s stories mix drama and simple messages to motivate their plot and intersperse striking, even lyrical, nature descriptions to amplify the human situation presented in the stories. Like Garshin’s and Chekhov’s stories, Korolenko’s do not prompt the conscience of the reader as much as show the process of a character’s conscience, explore various senses of justice, and portray different reasons for, and ways of, judging. A representative example appears in a scene from “In Bad Company,” a longish story that surveys the ways in which people choose to treat others. Outside the town where the hero, six-year-old Vasia, has his home, lives a group of beggars [nishchie]. Unknown to the adults in the beggar community, Vasia befriends their children. One day the adults return unexpectedly and find Vasia. During Vasia’s early moments in the company of the adults, the “chief beggar” and children’s father, Tyburtsii, gives the following instructions to Vasia, alerting Vasia to how he differs from the beggar children and commenting generally on the effects circumstances can

тихим голосом мудреца, который прекрасно знает, что всякая мудрость относительна, и вечной правды -- нет». (56).

19 For a popular reading of the positive aspects of Korolenko’s citizenry-through-prose, see Ershov 130-137.


21 While I do not mean to discount either the direct social application of Korolenko’s stories or readings that forward the political nature of the stories, I will not consider those understandings of Korolenko’s fiction in this study. For a socio-political reading of Korolenko’s work, particularly of the story “The forest is murmuring” [“Лес шумит” 1886], see V.I. Kaminskii, “Полеская легенда ‘Les shumit’ i problema obschestvennoi aktual’nosti literatury v tvorchestve V.G. Korolenko 1880-kh godov,” 171-179.
have on one’s actions and judgments:

[...] каждый идет своей дорожкой, и кто знает... может быть, это и хорошо, что твоя дорога пролегла через нашу. Для тебя хорошо, amíse [друг], потому что иметь в груди кусочек человеческого сердца, вместо холодного камня [...] -- Не понимаешь, конечно, потому что ты еще малец... Поэтому скажу тебе кратко, а ты когда-нибудь и вспомнишь слова философа Тыбурция: если когда-нибудь придет тебе судить вот его, то вспомни, что еще в то время, когда вы оба были дураками и играли вместе, -- что уже тогда ты шел по дороге, по которой ходят в штанах и с хорошим запасом провизии, а он бежал по своей оборванцем-бесприданником и с пустым брюхом (2: 48-49).

The scene is coloured by, on one hand, the boy's fear and awe of the imposing beggar and, on the other, the change in Tyburtsii's mood from anger to good-natured understanding. As with Vasia's other discoveries, the first encounter naturally makes him anxious and uncertain. Yet with time and patience Vasia comes to understand more clearly, and even accept the once foreign workings of each new world. His sense of right and wrong is alerted to new variations. As this example suggests, Korolenko has something to say about judgment and conscience (and says it more openly than Chekhov might). Those messages, though, are carefully and successfully worked into a story about a young boy's struggles, happiness, discoveries, and losses, making "In Bad Company" both instructive and entertaining, socially practical and artistic. This mix is a defining feature of Korolenko's fiction.

In such a scene there may be nothing startlingly new that adds to the development of Russian literature. But the outspoken nature with which Korolenko expressed his visions produced in his prose a discernable optimism -- a passing brightness rarely seen in Garshin's stories and a lightness less often present in Chekhov's. This optimism, a chief trait of Korolenko's isolation stories, owes much to how Korolenko portrayed Siberia and the unapologetic stance from which his stories view the narod. Both elements of his stories reveal the characters' enduring qualities.
The Siberian Element

Compared to stories set in cities or in the countryside not far from major centres, stories set in Siberia can evoke images of a lone existence amidst expansive spaces, in extreme weather, and with long periods of time between moments of contact with others. Such images, of course, are relative ones, ones that measure distance from Moscow or St Petersburg and that are conditioned by an understanding of Siberia as the home of exotic peoples, runaways, detained criminals and exiles. That those people live a geographically isolated existence seems a forgone supposition. The natural world, the argument might follow, is the barrier that isolates these people. Because of Siberia’s massive space, its tempestuous weather, and unpredictable creatures and peoples, others leave Siberians alone. Yet, the natural world of Korolenko’s stories, as well as being each story’s fundamental setting, is used primarily for emphatic reasons rather than as an isolating force. Nature emphasises mood and hints at events; it does not cut people off from others. A few examples will reveal clearly this priority.

In a foreboding passage, Korolenko sets the narrator of “Killer” into a strongly hinted-at adventure:

Мелькнуло еще два-три огонька разрозненных избенок. Кое-где на фоне черного леса клубился в сыром воздухе дымок, и искры вылетали и гасли, точно таяли во мраке. Наконец последнее жилье осталось сзади. Вокруг была лишь черная тайга да темная ночь (1: 127).

Exposed to whatever he might meet along the trail, the narrator is alone with a driver he has just met and the knowledge that others know both his route and that he is delivering an ample amount of money. He has imposed isolation on himself, on one hand, by removing himself from a familiar world, and, on the other, by heading off in

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22 For a brief review of the theme of Siberia in Russian literature see Leighton 200-201.
the middle of the night, thus cutting himself off from any awareness that daylight would provide of what is around him.

In such stories as "The Escapee from Sokolin" and "The Circassian," nature has an imposing quality that can depress a character's spirits. In "The Escapee from Sokolin," particularly, the natural world clamps down on the frame narrator, demanding certain usual actions from him and limiting others, revealing a constancy that removes the liveliness from his life. The title character appears second, only after the loneliness of the frame narrator is established and his mood explained. Much of his mood, we are given to understand, results from the enclosing and stifling effects of nature:

In fact, he simply is lonely, saddened because he has been left on his own. Nature heightens this sense in him. When the title character arrives the narrator's feeling of loneliness has been slightly allayed: the light and crackling of the fire he starts overcome the darkness and quiet of his hut [iurtas]. And the fire assumes the status of his momentary saviour from an unpleasant solitude. The fire not only brings light, sounds and warmth, but also attracts a traveller who proves to be a storyteller with an interesting tale.

[23] Similarly, near the end of "The Circassian" the first-person narrator records how the weather affects his spirit: «А снег все валил, покрывая землю, и на сердце все больше налегала тоска» (1: 267).
The early sections of “In Bad Company” are marked with a colourful blend of fondness and fact as the adult narrator remembers back to his eventful childhood. Nature still has a charming effect on him and creates “signposts” in his memory that deliver pictures to his consciousness.

Shortly after the narrator remembers an event in a similar way: «А в бурные осенние ночи, когда гиганты-тополи качались и гудели от налетавшего из-за прудов ветра, ужас разливался от старого замка и царил над всем городом» (2: 7).

Korolenko’s tendency to make nature emphasise a character’s feelings appears also in stories that are not set in Siberia. In the story “An Instant” [Мгновение 1886] the hero’s struggle in captivity is heightened by the seemingly parallel efforts of nature to break forth into a full storm. The hero, locked in a corner cell overlooking the sea, longs to be freed. His waiting is punctuated by anxious moments. The narrator does not conceal the parallel between the hero and the storm we are meant to understand, suggesting this in the similes he employs: «Хозе-Мария-Мигуель-Диаз почувствовал, что все внутри его дрожит и волнуется, как море» (4: 228).

As these examples suggest, often in Korolenko’s Siberian stories he will pause on a scene that draws on the relationship between the character and nature. That moment stresses the character’s distance from a past life or familiar land or underscores the immobility and enclosure felt by the character in the space he occupies. In these stories the natural world of Siberia does not produce unusual types of isolation. But that
particular geographic area provides the backdrop for isolation stories. Korolenko employs images of the taiga, communities of Tartars or Iakuts, and far eastern jails and penal colonies to offer particularly flavoured stories. These aspects of a protagonist’s geographical situation are as much a part of his life and mind set as are his daily chores and usual encounters. In none of his stories does Korolenko employ the inescapable isolation of nature that Tolstoy provides in “The Snowstorm.” Korolenko’s nature descriptions and the depictions of that particular geographical place do not concern the fine distinction between rescue and total loss, belonging and separateness, that the storm conditions of Tolstoy’s story make available.

In Korolenko’s fiction nature emphasises a character’s isolation -- his distance from his usual home, the constant reminder of an irrecoverable past time, his weighty sense of restriction or inactivity, his lack of control over the actions of his mind. That natural environment does not cause the isolation. The natural world Korolenko describes details the manifest physical existence of his characters, but their isolation results from social factors.

The Social Element

In his most, perhaps, obvious isolation stories of the 1880s -- “Iashka,” “Killer,” and “The Escapee from Sokolin” -- Korolenko depicts conflicts between models of social authority and individual expression. When the title characters dissent from a given order, they find themselves alone, even prosecuted for their actions. Korolenko sets the

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stories within a frame story, the actions of which speak to isolation as well. The frame narrator's situation parallels that of the title character. In each case the frame narrator is a Korolenko-like character, a newcomer or transient to the region and perhaps a member of the intelligentsia. He takes part in the story in a gently active way -- by offering his new acquaintance a sympathetic and patient, if curious, deportment -- that earns him the trust of the stranger and a personal telling of those moments in the stranger's past that caused him to be isolated. This telling assumes two forms. The inner story of "Iashka" very much resembles an investigative report, stocked well with detailed descriptions and interviews. In "Killer" and "The Escapee from Sokolin" the new acquaintance becomes the inner narrator so that those sections of the story become skaz.25

In "Iashka," the theme of control appears from the narrator's opening comments. The first sentence stresses the speaker's subordination and his directed entry into the prison's world of containment: «...Нас ввели в коридор одной из сибирских тюрем, длинный, узкий и мрачный» (1: 86). The narrator, on the way to the place he will spend his political exile, is being held in transit in a prison alongside regular inmates. For the first few pages he provides a sensory description from his one-man cell [odinochka], but filters his perceptions through his particular consciousness, rather than dictating an objective account. His approach stresses his personal involvement in the story, an involvement directed by his curiosity and commitment to obtaining a full understanding of his new situation, and an involvement permitted because he abides by

25"The Escapee from Sokolin" is not skaz throughout the framed story. The frame narrator reports the first episodes of Bagylai's story (parts III, IV, and V) before Bagylai takes over in his own, conspicuous manner of speaking Russian in part VI.
the prison rules.

The new situation revolves around the actions and personality of a regular inmate, Iashka, a sectarian [podvizhnik] who kicks violently on his cell door whenever the authorities appear in his corridor. His banging is a form of denunciation against the authorities who, in the end, exercise their power over Iashka to the fullest and send him to a mental asylum. Iashka's presence is not completely removed, however; once Iashka is gone, another inmate carries on Iashka's kicking when the authorities come near.

The narrator discovers that Iashka's religious convictions isolated him as soon as he accepted them. His present solitary confinement resulted when Iashka made a more direct statement of his feelings, when he actively stated his position in the face of superiors at the prison:

-- Собственно держат его в одиночке за непризнание властей, за грубость. Полицмейстер ли, кто ли придет, хоть тут сам губернатор приходи, -- он и ему грубость окажет. Все свое: «Беззаконники да слуги антихристовы!» Вот через это самое... А то раньше свободно он ходил по всей даже тюрьме без препятствий... (1: 96).

Iashka is convinced so firmly of his convictions that he denies the possibility of views that do not accord with them. Not unlike Garshin's patient in "The Red Flower," who sees the world only as it accords with his convictions, Iashka's perspective is unwavering and exclusive. On one hand, Iashka is isolated by others because of how he acts. On the other, he freely removes himself from that world in order to live according to his beliefs. Unlike in Garshin's story, in "Iashka" Korolenko portrays an unaccepting authority that actively challenges Iashka's ability to endure. The story makes no effort to justify the actions of the authorities, but strives to explain Iashka's situation. It is Iashka's efforts and enduring qualities in the face of unrelenting authoritarianism that
the reader is to sense more fully. The narrator is the measure between the two, expressing his individual side when permitted and abiding by the rules when required.

Korolenko’s approach here is a blatant question-and-answer effort to expose the effect of the authorities’ power. The nub of the story rests with a paradox. The authorities do not allow Iashka to remove himself from society. To show their disapproval they exile him and, as his reactions become bolder, isolate him. Then they fully detain him in a mental asylum. The mood of control that opens the story is carried to its fullest realisation.

In “Killer,” among other topics, Korolenko addresses the issue of neighbourhood or proximity that the Russian word sosedstvo represents. He has his narrator make a thin allusion to the theme near the middle of the story:

Вообще, когда мне приходится слышать или читать сравнение Сибири с дореформенной Россией, -- сравнение, которое одно время было в таком ходу, -- мне всегда приходит на ум одно резкое различие. Различие это воплощается в виде толстой фигуры моего юмориста-приятеля. Дело в том, что у дореформенной России не было соседства России же реформированной, а у Сибири есть это соседство, и оно порождает то ироническое отношение к своей родной действительности, которое вы можете встретить в Сибири даже у людей не особенно интеллигентных (1: 152).

But from the story’s opening, questions of belonging and separateness, openness and evasiveness -- topics that are the social counterpart to the more spatial distinction of sosedstvo -- face the narrator and reader.

The introductory situation of the frame narrator offers him little comfort. As he and his first coachman cross a river by ferry with other passengers, he is excluded from the locals’ banter. His coachman chats freely with the others and is vague when asked by the narrator about the fellow travellers. They know each other and who the narrator is, but he knows none of them. He is a visitor to the region, there on business
that has him transporting sizeable amounts of money. The locals know this information and, as he learns from the station master at one of his stops, some are expecting him:

-- Эх, батюшка, Иван Семеныч! -- уповарял меня почтовый смотритель, толстый добрый, с которым во время частых переездов я успел завязать приятельские отношения. -- Ей-богу, мой вам совет: плонйте, не ездите к ночи. Ну их и с делами! Своя-то жизнь дороже чужих денег. Ведь тут теперь на сто верст кругом только и толков, что о нашем процессе да об этих деньгах. Бакланяшки, поди, уже заметались... Ночуйте!.. (I: 124).

But he goes on, blindly trusting a driver he does not know, along roads he has never travelled. He is able to gain a smattering of security and overcome his loneliness from a friendly conversation with his second coachman, Fedor. Fedor’s life, too, has known loneliness and isolation.

Fedor explains that he bears the label of “killer.” He saved a woman and her children from being robbed and murdered when he killed their robbers’ leader. The authorities want to try him for this act, however. As he waits for the trial, he bides his time as a coachman. Fedor is neither part of the community nor a stranger. Along this journey with the narrator Fedor reveals the likelihood of his story when he defends the narrator...
from the same robbers that shared the narrator's ferry. The robbers know Fedor well enough to respect his words and actions.

There is a juxtaposition here. To one side is the narrator, one whom everyone knows but who can never belong. To the other is Fedor, one whom everyone knows and who always belongs, but who is always on the fringe of that community or who belongs conditionally. The story brings together two different, but, similarly lonely characters. Fedor's life naturally and quietly evolves into a lonely one until finally the authorities distinguish him. The narrator throws himself into the community a bit loudly, drawing to himself undesirable attention and minimal camaraderie. Like the narrator of "Iashka," this narrator recalls Fedor's actions and words with attention to Fedor's feelings and tone. He is sympathetic to Fedor's position. And through his own easy interaction with Fedor, the narrator reveals that Fedor's lone existence arises from events outside his control. If Fedor had the means, it seems, to control events in his life, he would not have wished for such isolation.

In "Killer" Korolenko opposes the notoriety of the narrator to that of the title character. Both are kept to the fringe of the community, but under scrutiny, and both respond to these conditions with discomfort, yet perseverance.

"The Escapee from Sokolin" is built on the interaction of two stories, the frame and the framed. Each story presents an image of isolation and charts how the isolated one acts in isolation.

«...Мой сожитель уехал. Мне приходилось ночевать одному в нашей юрте» (1: 172). So starts "The Escapee from Sokolin" with the frame narrator's brief, almost sullen, account of the extent of his loneness. He is uncomfortable being alone. For him loneness is not what he actively seeks. Thus his spirits rise when a visitor stops in who
is looking for a warm hut to spend the evening.

The visitor, Bagylai, has farmed a bit of land in the taiga for the past two years. The frame narrator has heard of him from others and offers him a place to rest. On this night Bagylai recounts a tale from his life, a life that changed, he points out, when he stopped listening to his parents (1: 182). A revealing aspect of his story emerges from the detailed retelling of how he and a group of others had been charged in a murder, sent to Sakhalin, and then escaped from the island. From the moment the group is contained, Bagylai recalls, its members longed to be free (1: 193). Yet they worked together as if they had always been a defined unit. The passing comment "и поднялись ребята сразу все, как один" (1: 200) appropriately defines all the group members' actions. The necessary harmony is not enough to keep them together. When they are off Sakhalin they go their separate ways. Bagylai wants to be on his own, and he exercises this desire throughout the remainder of his life. Even as he lives on his settlement, he stays separate from the others, away from any sense of being accountable except to himself. The morning after his visit with the frame narrator, Bagylai tells the frame narrator that he has decided to leave his homestead and return to his past life of roaming. The loneness of the frame narrator, a passive loneness, opposes the loneness of Bagylai, a loneness actively sought.

Bagylai's preference to be apart from others contrasts the frame narrator's sombre evaluation of being alone. And their actual interaction -- the interaction of the two narratives, it could be said -- reveals the depth of this contrast. The frame narrator pushes Bagylai to tell his story of his escape from Sakhalin, knowingly aware that to tell the story is painful for the young man. Intrigued by the visitor and happy for his company, the frame narrator pries into Bagylai's personal world, expressing the sort of
nagging desire for accountability that might have chased Bagylai from his family and from his newly accepting community.

When Iashka, Fedor, and Bagylai move away from their usual lives, each character is following up a personal inclination, a calling, perhaps, that draws him from his usual family life. Religious conviction, disheartening events, and youthful desire for self-expression create in these characters the need to be cut off from their past. The characters remove themselves from that existence and move on to something new. These conditions are the product of natural responses to life’s unpredictable events. The alterations in attitude reflect types of change, even growth, and announce each character’s efforts to deal with his immediate situation. The characters do not sever all ties with that usual life; their unhappy thoughts of the past suggest a bond to those roots. But the title characters forsake their usual life and accept the consequences of this action, an action that delivers challenges of its own. The optimism delivered by the stories emerges, not from the successful realisation of their goals but, from the perseverance and genuine attraction to their actions that guides each character’s efforts.

In his most political story, “A Strange One” [Чудная 1880/1905], Korolenko matches up two different and seemingly opposed characters, both of whom endure a form of isolation. Like “Killer” and “The Escapee from Sokolin,” “A Strange One” is a *skaz* tale, recounted by a peasant, Gavrilov, a considerate man, it appears, who tells of a

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27 Some twenty-five years passed before the story could appear in the legal press. Korolenko wrote “A Strange One” during his political exile, from February to June 1880. It first appeared in 1905 in two publications: in the journal *Russian Wealth* №9 under the title “Komandirovka” and in the publication *Donskaia rech’* under its present title. On the publication history, see Korolenko, *SS*, 1: 483.
past event from his life as a convoy guard [*provozhatyi*]. On one of his trips, Gavrilov escorts a young woman who is in failing health to her exile. She is a member of the *intelligentsia* and has populist leanings. Gavrilov's sympathy and curiosity is piqued by the woman, yet she ignores or rebuffs his efforts to console her, expressing the truth of her name (Morozova). Korolenko clearly contrasts the two characters, and, because of Morozova's demeanour, keeps them from coming together. In addition, they are from different social groups and reveal different attitudes toward life: Morozova seems tired and disappointed, while Gavrilov is energetic and accepting. Despite his sincere concern and curiosity, Gavrilov is kept from entering a friendship with Morozova. Her stance seems to contradict the ideology she once proclaimed. And, one might say that she has cut herself off from her past, from all other life in fact, and is awaiting death. But once she has given up on life and her dreams, she loses sight of the opportunity that takes place before her -- the very result to which her earlier life's efforts may have earnestly strained to attain. Lauren Leighton explains perfectly both the irony and the optimism that pervade the story:

> the roles of *narod* and intelligentsia are reversed by Gavrilov's pity for the girl, and all of his attempts to comfort her -- to 'go to the intelligentsia', so to speak [...] She dies without realising that her former ideals were made a reality by this simple peasant who does not even understand her ideological debates.\(^{28}\)

Undaunted by the coldness of the young woman, Gavrilov does not let up his efforts or stop feeling for her. His attitude places him alongside Iashka, Fedor and Bagylai, and this consistency in Korolenko's heroes points to character traits that the author saw as positive and that gave him hope.

Unlike Morozova, the hero of Korolenko's tiny story "The Old Bell Ringer"

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\(^{28}\)Leighton 211-212.
[Старый звонарь 1885] dies savouring a moment. The old man is above the church in the bell tower, away from the congregation, at an Easter service. What he hears in their voices forces him to recall a time when he stood in the church as a healthy, strong man who was filled with hope for future happiness (3: 8). Happiness never replaced his hardships and worries, and that past time seems as untouchable as the congregation seems to him now. He has reason to be as disenchanted as Morozova, but responds differently. Old Mikheich knows he soon will die, but when he is called upon to ring the bells at the end of the service, new energies arise in him — as if to echo the significance of the Easter service — and he rings the bells more wondrously [chudno] than ever before, revealing an inner ability to overcome his thoughts of hardships and still share of himself. In this story Korolenko moves away from explaining events that alter a character's life as ones determined by some earthly authority. In "The Old Bell Ringer" he dwells for a moment on the reality that some lives are hard and limited by daily existence and natural occurrences. The features, however, that define his other positive heroes, are present in Mikheich, too. To repeat, for Korolenko, the ability to overcome one's condition by drawing on inner strength and acting with perseverance offers reason to be optimistic. (Korolenko presents this ability as a character trait most openly and most sentimentally in his long work "The Blind Musician," a work that I will not assign to the classification of "short fiction" — it is almost 130 pages. The premise of the story is obvious from its title, as is its connection with "The Old Bell Ringer" — note the modifier that expresses the character's apparent limitation and the noun assigned to the action through which he expresses himself.)

I mentioned above that "In Bad Company" explores the ways in which people choose to treat others. The story is a first-person account, retold from adulthood, of
activities that touched a young boy, Vasia. The account evolves from a description of how a colony of beggars is expelled from the community to a personal chronicle of how Vasia comes to befriend those beggars and, thus, distance himself from his own community. Isolation is an important theme in the story. At the heart of the story is the often considered question of who enjoys the right or authority to judge another. Indeed, the title of the story is the product of one such judgment by a townsman, Ianush, who, near the middle of the story, chides Vasia for being sympathetic to the beggars: «Вы в дурном обществе! ... Жаль, очень жаль сына почтенных родителей, который не щадит семейной чести» (2: 25). Instead of seeing the child’s innocent curiosity and sympathy, Ianush immediately tries to instill in Vasia a sense of different types of people. Others share the same opinion as Ianush, and as Vasia follows his curiosity about the town and its outskirts, the townsfolk come more and more to see him as footloose: «Вообще все меня звали бродягой, негодным мальчишкой» (2: 26). Soon after, this regard evolves into isolation: «С шести лет я испытывал уже ужас одиночества» (2: 28). When Vasia eventually befriends the beggar children, an anticipated kinship quickly grows.

Thus isolation creates the thematic parameters of the story: the condition earned by a curious and accepting young boy and the condition imposed on those who do not fit into the tight, social expectations of the community. With equal intensity isolation defines the freedom of Vasia and the condemnation experienced by the beggars. In the middle emerges Vasia’s father, the local magistrate, who is respected by both the community and the colony of beggars for the sensitive attention he shows to each case. It is not a side of him that the boy knows, however, for the father has
remained distant from Vasia." From the various threads running through the story, all of which are connected to an understanding of isolation, Korolenko offers much that can be resolved by the story's close and much that can be seen as encouraging. Vasia is at the centre of these threads, not simply because he is the narrator, but also because he is the catalyst that helps these three secluded groups overcome the distance that separates them from each other.

Throughout this collection of stories, Korolenko employs isolation as a condition that emphasises a character's will, reveals his desire for individual expression, and, subsequently, announces a feeling of optimism. The limits of isolation include Iashka's gloomy cell, but more often they emerge from societal relations -- the scrutiny of townsfolk in "Killer" and "In Bad Company," the coldness and disenchantment of Morozova -- or such inescapable conditions as Bagylai's need to be free and old Mikheich's unfulfilled hopes and lost time. These are wholly plausible conditions and suggest that, although Korolenko might draw on exotic settings to colour his stories and suspenseful situations to motivate them, a fundamental goal of his writing was to reveal in a variety of characters a spirit to endure. In the most amiable of characters this spirit is praiseworthy, and even in the more unprincipled, such as Bagylai, it deserves to be considered for sympathy.

"Makar's Dream"

Korolenko wrote "Makar's Dream" while waiting out the end of his political exile in Iakutia. It was the fourth of the seven "Siberian stories" written in the 1880s, a story

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29 This point recalls Korolenko's own relationship with his father.
in which Korolenko continued his sketch-like approach to depicting the usual qualities of Siberian peasants. In “Makar’s Dream” Korolenko goes a bit further in his description of Makar than he had in descriptions of other peasants. By this I mean that he was trying to bring together two seeming extremes: the barbaric existence of Makar, yet an existence that deserves sympathy. A key element that earns this sympathy is Makar’s constant isolation, for it is the condition that defines his peasant existence. The experiences of this existence that are depicted in the story make his life appear both brutal and brutish. From that same life he is able to find the powers to prevail over those who judge with little understanding.

In his seemingly roguish and coarse peasant hero, Korolenko reveals humanity and awareness by depicting Makar through two journeys, one that tests Makar’s everyday resourcefulness and one that musters his capacity to appreciate a certain outcome of his actions. Makar manages each journey alone, in isolation, revealing a certain lasting power, if not resourcefulness. On the first journey he negotiates his way through familial and societal relations in his efforts to obtain a bottle of vodka and claim the spoils of his trap-line. On the second, Makar is taken away from his earthly life to be made accountable for his lifelong actions and attitudes. Together, the two journeys reveal the developed consciousness of Makar, a consciousness that is pushed more and more to express its limits. In my reading of “Makar’s Dream,” the story progresses through stages of accountability: in the opening, to the sympathetic narrator Makar is an average Siberian peasant who is not accountable for his actions; in the second, Makar is responsible to himself, and less so to his wife; in the third, Makar answers for his immediate action to a god’s agent; and, finally, he must justify his life’s actions before the one who will decide his final fate. This development, though, is
not meant to applaud or generate a newly formed attitude in the hero -- as, say, Dickens intended with Scrooge. Rather, it is meant to reveal the potential of Makar's attitude and, thus, another view of a Siberian peasant, a peasant who out of necessity maintains a rigidly independent attitude, a chief feature of which is his constant isolation.

The story tells of how Makar, a peasant of Russian lineage in a distant Iakutian village, Chalgan, spends Christmas Eve. In preparation for the next day's holiday, Makar sets off from home to acquire for himself and his wife a bottle of vodka. To two Tartars he offers to cut and haul wood in exchange for a one-rouble advance payment. He buys the vodka and, instead of returning home, settles down in a corner of the local pothouse to drink until drunk. Makar is not there for long, however; to make room for others, the proprietor kicks him out into a snowbank. The narrator describes how Makar pulls himself up and makes his way home to receive a boot and a swat from his wife.

On his way home he was struck by the idea that a fox is caught along his trapline. When he is unable to fall asleep because of the effects of the vodka, Makar lifts himself from bed and heads into the forest to check his snares. Along the way he inspects the snares of others. He stops suddenly when he meets his rival Aleshka who has been snooping around Makar's snares. They both see a fox in one of them and race to it. The fox gets away and after a scuffle Aleshka runs off, too, leaving Makar without a hat and wet from the snow. Horribly tired and cold, Makar feels that he will die, and the narrator observes that, in fact, Makar does die.

In the next scene, the entirety of the death is explored:

Как это случилось, он не заметил. Он знал, что из него должно что-то выйти, и ждал, что вот-вот оно выйдет... Но ничего не выходило. Между тем он сознавал, что уже умер, и потому лежал смирно, без
Thus begins the section of the story that describes Makar’s judgment after death. An old priest who had died five years earlier leads Makar to Toion, before whom the good and evil that Makar did during his life will be judged. When Toion enters, Makar sees the actions of his life come into his mind. At this moment, the narrator reports, Makar feels shame and fear, but still hopes that he can conceal from Toion some of his bad acts. Makar tries to fudge the truth when asked to admit his wrongdoings and sins. He even tries to put his foot on the scales that are measuring the good and evil in his life in order to lessen the imbalance toward the evil side. These acts infuriate Toion and he decides that Makar will atone for his sins by serving in the place of the horse that pulls for the church warden and policeman of Chalgan. As soon as Toion passes his sentence, however, his son arrives and observes that Toion’s ruling is harsh [tiiazheio]. With genuine sympathy the son proposes that perhaps Makar has something else to say. The opportunity to justify himself and the sign of understanding inspire Makar with eloquence. He speaks with conviction and truthfully, arguing that Toion’s decision is unjust [nepraur’no] and that all his life Makar had been pushed and pressured, but never cared for by those who demanded of him. His life became meaningless except for the obligations he had to fulfil. The scales of judgment lean to his favour and Toion softens as he understands Makar’s truth. This single evaluation of his life makes Makar wonder how he had endured that horrible burden [uzhasnoe bremia] until now. And the oft-quoted explanation of the story appears to Makar as a simple answer: “He had borne it because hope had still loomed ahead, like a star through the mist” [“On nes’ego potomu, chto vperedi vse eshe maychila — zvezdochkoj v tumane — nadежda” (1: 68)]. And Toion gives Makar justice (in that world).
A lot happens in the story that attests to Korolenko’s taste for detail and his story-telling skills, and thus his effort to provide as plausible and engaging a portrait as possible of the minimal and dismal pleasures available to Makar and others in his town. We meet Makar’s wife, some Tartar traders, Makar’s cunning horse, the Christmas crowd at the local pothouse, some Chalgan criminals, the priest Ivan, the great Toion and his son, as well as Toion’s personal force of angels. As this lengthy summary indicates, we are given no small variety of scenes, scenes that test Makar’s will, search out his conscience, comment on his spousal affection, and push his cunning to the limit. We also receive a sense of Siberia that is meant to trigger our senses: the vodka mixed with tobacco and the impression of the wily Tartars, the cold and wet of the snow, the smoke and sweat of the pothouse, the sounds of Christmas services and the unending splendour of the taiga and its creatures, and Toion, that creation of Makar’s dream, a god dressed in rich furs and velvet-lined boots who receives people in a hut with a silver engraved chimney. All these details clearly suggest a town and situation different from the Petersburg or Moscow that appears in so much other Russian fiction or from what might be found in a Russian story’s “provincial town of N.” At the same time, these details include the features of Chalgan that provide ample burden for Makar and reduce his life’s joys to those same few pleasures of many other stories’ hard up peasants and little men. Taken together, Korolenko’s eye for detail and sense of what makes a good story reveal his priority -- to tell a good story, rather than prescribe a set moral. A lone, isolated hero who seemingly faces a challenging life is a key element to this “good story.”

In broad terms, the story’s mood changes from a sober, sympathetic opening through a series of eventful and telling episodes that often are rendered lightly. The
story ends with Makar's forceful and emotional self-defence. By far the middle sections are more active. They involve and introduce the colourful characters, they develop from suspense and unpredictability, and they provide us with the few glimpses of Makar from which we are to appreciate the narrator's brief introduction and to piece together an image of Makar's usual life. It is only against this backdrop of potentially typical events that Makar's excursion with the priest Ivan and Makar's stand before Toion can be measured. The action scenes of the story, then, are framed between two static narratives that account sympathetically for Makar's life. The narrator's opening words outline compassionately Makar's lot. The final scene in the story is Makar's defence before Toion, an oration in which Makar, too, speaks with feeling about his hardships.

The story's larger middle sections depict Makar in action, portraying the two journeys mentioned above: they show how Makar acts with reflex responses to that which pops into his mind and how he acts when he is prompted by the priest Ivan to be conscious of the potential repercussions of his actions. To reiterate, the story depicts Makar's developed awareness. The story's linear structure leads our reading from an external view of the hero to the hero's considered, internal appreciation of himself.

Coincidentally, the story reveals a consistent and determined individual. Although the first half of the story suggests that Makar rarely reflects consciously on his actions, the second half reveals that, when pushed, Makar does have the capacity to reflect and understand the ramifications of what he does.

First, though, the brief opening chapter (it is one and one-half pages long) deserves attention. The story's focus is touched on there, and, as well, fruitful hints are expressed of what will follow in the story.

It is a balanced yet ambiguous prelude -- it reveals both his belonging and his
isolation -- in which the narrator reveals a limited fondness for Makar, referring to the hero as "my Makar" yet depicting objectively the troubles Makar faces. The chapter explains the usual goings-on for Makar as a blend of the ruthlessly mundane and hopefully ideal. The first half of the chapter maps out slightly the unclear division between Makar's belonging in the Chalgan community and his being alone, without roots: he is not really Russian, not really Iakut, and part of an isolated community that is only a few generations old. As the narrator notes, the community is a "глухая слободка Чалган -- затерялась в далекой якутской тайге" (1: 41). Yet, Makar, according to the narrator, cannot be much different from others, for he is a symbol for every little man who suffers from an exacting world. He is "тот самый Макар; на которого, как известно, валятся все шишки" (1: 41).

The second half of the chapter describes Makar's physical well-being and his attitude. Makar is a physically hardened peasant who, when sober, looks only to his own immediate sustenance. He is also the Makar who, when drunk, is able to wonder about changing the present, a Makar for whom drink is an escape. Running through both parts of this chapter are references to the harsh conditions that make up Makar's everyday life. Thus, the three points of Makar's world that the narrator stresses are his belonging, yet lone existence; his constant and immediate attention to satisfying his needs; and, his living in an exacting world. The first point concerns me here, but Korolenko has made the second and third ones closely related to the first, and I will have cause to consider them, too.

In the middle sections of the story the isolation of Makar's existence appears as a product of his character and his actions. He has, for instance, no base for, or care for, conversation. Not as stunted as the efforts of Akaki Akakievich in Gogol's classic short
story, Makar's speech is marked by sentences of rarely more than four words. They are mere utterances, not statements, and tend to make up brief comments, responses, and questions to immediate worries. Consider the moments before Makar leaves to buy vodka. He is at home with his wife when the idea for the purchase comes to him.

Ему пришла в голову счастливая мысль. Он встал и надел свою рованную шубу. Его жена, крепкая, жилистая, замечательно сильная и столь же замечательно безобразная женщина, знавшая насквозь все его незаметные помышления, угадала и на этот раз его намерение.

-- Куда, дьявол? Опять один водку кушать хочешь?

-- Молчи! Куплю одну бутылку. Завтра вместе выпьем. -- Он хлопнул ее по плечу так сильно, что она покачнулась, и лукаво подмигнул. Таково женское сердце: она знала, что Макар непременно ее надует, но поддалась обаянию супружеской ласки (1: 43).

Makar forgoes the need to engage his wife in conversation or, at least, lacks curiosity to inquire of or discuss a situation. His speech action is utilitarian. In addition, what he communicates lacks sincerity and thus a unifying link between him and his wife.

Similarly, when Makar stops in at the Tartars' hut to trade his services for money, the Tartars know his game and play their own in return. The point, though, is that, despite his voicing pleasantries, Makar is not there to socialise. He has a goal in mind.

Conversation expedites the process in both cases. In both scenes there is no closeness to the other, no connection, no careful or caring consideration of the other. Makar is isolated among others. More pathetically, Makar's cunning is blatantly useless.

Korolenko makes clear Makar's tendency for self-satisfaction and his inability to communicate; that is, his passive and active efforts to cut himself off from others.

But, as well, there is a bigger picture outside Makar's intentions, a picture that Korolenko includes subtly to express something of the everyday situations in Makar's community. Instead of the light reportage that delivers the first chapter, in the story's middle part Korolenko relies on implied realities to portray the lot of Makar and others.
Recalling the same scenes, we see that Makar and his wife do not have a rouble to spend on vodka at Christmas. And, when Makar stops in on the Tartars, a few seconds pass before they realise he is there. Their silence should not simply suggest Makar's unimportance; it also underscores their own sadness. They remain unmoved, overtaken by their memories. Although Makar makes no effort to consider life outside his own imagination, Korolenko shows that others struggle, too. Makar is uncharitable. We cannot say that he does not know what it takes to be charitable, for his words to his wife imply that he knows she would like to share his bottle. But something causes him to act the way he does, and Korolenko does not apologise for those actions.

Mirsky has suggested that Makar's mind is "naively selfish," implying that Makar's self-satisfying ways arise naturally, without a measure against which to gauge their rightness. In this sense, Makar's pattern of reasoning shows him to be alone -- without the support of a prescribed ideology -- without a need for "right actions" other than those that arise from his reflex responses to the moment. Overtaken by thoughts of the drunken pleasure that lies ahead, Makar does not consider how his wife will react to his drinking the vodka before returning. His promise to his wife has no effect on his conscience. Nor does he worry that he has forfeited the pleasure he planned for the following day.

Yet, he is no more spiritually and physically alone than others. In one sense, each character is isolated in Makar's community. In the scene in which Makar checks his trap-line, his rival, Aleshka, shows himself to be equally uncaring. In fact, when they both notice a fox in a snare -- the single catch of the night -- the thought of

30 Mirsky 357.
sharing the catch does not occur to them, so they both lose out. Korolenko also uses the scene realistically, drawing attention to two somewhat desperate (if greedy) men checking their snares in the middle of the night. Moreover, the lone walk along the line of snares offers a telling image, that might be assigned to each of the story’s characters, of an individual moving from beginning to end, unsure of what might occur next. The trap-line walk is quite different from the one that Makar takes with the priest Ivan in the second half of the story’s middle section.

To this point, Makar’s story is about single perspective and submission to fate. The second half of the story tries to impress on Makar the limitations of a single perspective and that he need not submit himself fully to what is delivered by fate. With the priest at hand, Makar is shown that his actions have greater results than immediate material satisfaction. Early in the walk with Ivan, Makar learns that the act of forgiveness has noble qualities, as does the occasional kind act, especially when judgment soon will follow. We start to see a different Makar, still to be sure one who is looking to make his way through life, but a Makar who acts good-naturedly towards those he knows and with whom he recognises kinship. The immediacy of the priest’s examples make his reasoning clear to Makar in the same way that the results of his own usual actions seem plain to him. In both cases there is no greater ideal, just cause and effect.

As they walk to judgment, Makar meets those who have been judged unworthy to be moved onward after death. These people satisfied themselves on earth at the expense of others and have been held back from a heavenly life to consider their actions. In contrast, above them move children, freely flitting about, free, one assumes, because they died filled only with innocence. The contrast impresses on Makar, most directly
because it prompts him to wonder what his outcome will be. But his priorities do not change. As he did in the previous section, Makar relies on naive cunning to get himself through -- in this case, through the temptations he meets on the walk. Makar's thoughts and actions remain self-centred, but his methods change -- he becomes outwardly considerate and starts to communicate -- as he more directly has to account for his action.

In the final section of the story, Makar's naive cunning fails him before Toion, enraging his judge, and almost leads to his being unjustly sentenced. Toion judges Makar on a universal scale, gathering Makar's sins without placing them in context. As the story's first three sections reveal, Makar is neither meek nor humble. When given the chance to speak on his own behalf, he eloquently defends his actions, noting that he could hardly have acted otherwise and wondering, moreover, why those before him with greater power did not set him on the right path or aid him. Where his cunning failed him, his forthright, truthful account saves him. What is key here is that a contextualised account of the actions that form Makar's life earns him sympathy. With "Makar's Dream" Korolenko hoped to achieve what Makar achieved with his stand before Toion: a truthful account of Makar's harsh existence, an existence that deserves sympathy.

Makar is a useful device for Korolenko. Korolenko entrenches Makar in isolation to such an extent that despite his hero enjoying the freedom to pursue his desires, he almost always does so on his own -- without the good wishes of others, without a past he can call his own, without the ability to communicate or to see the world outside his own view. But this is not bad; this is life for Makar, and he does not complain too loudly. The instinctual, even wild, character of Makar provides Korolenko with a productive
image of genuine yet unprincipled action.

I would argue that Korolenko’s vision of Makar does not seek apologies, to place blame, or to glorify a “little man.” Makar was meant to be viewed, in essence, no differently than Korolenko’s escapee from Sakhalin was regarded by his frame narrator: «Я видел в нем только молодую жизнь, полную энергии и силы, страстно рвущуюся на волю» (1: 214).

At the beginning of this analysis I made a passing comparison of Makar to Dickens’s Scrooge (A Christmas Carol 1843). Structural similarities and shared images in the two works suggest the comparison to be an instructive one. The linear pattern of each story reveals a process of learning on both characters’ parts. Makar reveals his limited ingenuity, but does adapt his defence in accordance with the changing demands on his actions, present and past. Similarly, by the visit of the Second Spirit, Scrooge admits that his awareness is changing: “‘Spirit,’ said Scrooge submissively, “conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.”’31 Their exposure to the spirits affects Makar and Scrooge, and are thus important aspects of each story. Most dramatically, when given a glimpse of what their lives will be in the immediate future, each character is prompted to act anew: Makar gathers all his boldness and enterprise to create a most eloquent defence of his actions, and Scrooge wilfully accepts the Christmas spirit as his daily attitude. But, Korolenko and Dickens are intentionally unclear about how this exposure occurs. In both stories, there is uncertainty about what might be dream. In her study of Korolenko’s prose, Radha

Balasubramanian prudently backs away from pin-pointing the moment when Makar's dream begins.\textsuperscript{32} It is a wise and safe stance, for Korolenko does not indicate whether the dream makes up all the action of the story or only those moments when Makar apparently falls off into a drunken slumber. While the question in Korolenko's story surrounds the uncertainty of what is dream, in Dickens's story the author plays with the "\textit{spirit of Christmas}," never clarifying whether Scrooge's spirits appear as a dream.\textsuperscript{33} Something changes Scrooge's attitude, but Dickens ties the revelation closely in with Scrooge's sleeping time so there is slight vagueness left about whether the visitations occurred when Scrooge was awake. Early plans for Korolenko's story proposed that Makar would wake after the dream, but, unlike Scrooge, would not lead a changed life.\textsuperscript{34} Such a resolution to the story reveals Korolenko's different intent. Nonetheless, the division of the stories into "two journeys," a usual earthly one and a spiritually assisted one appealed to both authors. Similar content is invoked in both spiritual journeys: the priest Ivan, Toion's angels, as well as Toion and his son, parallel Scrooge's three spirits; on the scales that will measure the good and evil that Makar did in his life is a huge pan for his sins [\textit{gromadnaia chashka dlia grekhov}] and the ghost of Jacob Marley arrives fettered with a chain of sins he "forged in life"\textsuperscript{33}; the heroes are

\textsuperscript{32}Balasubramanian 125.

\textsuperscript{33}Did the idea come in Scrooge's sleep, or was the message delivered to him as a series of ghosts? In 1843, to this story Dickens included the following preface: "I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book to raise the Ghost of an Idea which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it" (Dickens, \textit{A Christmas Carol}, 1).

\textsuperscript{34}"Originally," explains Carl Proffer, "Makar's dream was a real dream -- comparable to 'The Dream of a Ridiculous Man' or the original version of Gogol's 'The Nose.' At the point where it now ends, Makar woke up, went out, and was met by the same series of hardships and torments he had always known" (Proffer 32).
equally unfeeling and inconsiderate, and each seems content to "edge his way along the crowded paths of life" alone until visited by visions that ask them to take their life's actions into account.\textsuperscript{36}

This particular comparison proposes that many of the elements were there for Korolenko to create a tale with an equally Christian moral, a tale in which he converts a churlish, self-centred character into a considerate, caring man who is willing to atone for his past actions and bring himself out of isolation and into his community.\textsuperscript{37} Yet, Makar is not ready to change his ways; Korolenko does not present the type of didactic message that steered the plot of Dickens's tale. Korolenko is, however, after a sympathetic and a truthful account that reveals the inner spirit, drive for self-expression and recognition of justice of even the harshest individuals, traits that Makar developed for the most part on his own among equally harsh individuals and ungovernable conditions. Indeed, he is isolated in a community where most individuals seem alone, if not isolated. Makar fits neatly into Korolenko's collection of non-conformist characters who stand by their independence and integrity and who will not be swayed or pressured.

\textsuperscript{35}Dickens, \textit{A Christmas Carol}, 20.

\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Ibid.}, 5.

\textsuperscript{37}Dickens did not conceal this intent. In a preface to the \textit{Christmas Books} volume of the \textit{Standard Edition} of his works he wrote: "My purpose was, in a whimsical kind of masque which the good-humour of the season justified, to awaken some loving and forbearing thoughts, never out of season in a Christian land." Charles Dickens, \textit{Christmas Books} (London: Chapman & Hall, Limited, nd).
Concluding Remarks

Garshin, Chekhov, and Korolenko were well prepared to write about isolation. Each knew isolation first-hand: details of Garshin’s bouts of madness, Chekhov’s roles as lone family provider and explorer to Sakhalin, and Korolenko’s repeated political exiles are almost as well-known as “The Red Flower,” “A Dreary Story,” and “Makar’s Dream.” Moreover, the young writers were fortunate heirs to a rich literary legacy that also had explored isolation and, thus, that provided them with direction in their own work. Each writer, however, displayed his particular vision of isolation in short fiction: for Garshin, isolation was an extreme condition in which characters exercise their conscience; for Chekhov, isolation was a commonplace whose variety of portrayals depicted a spectrum of causes and responses; for Korolenko, isolation tested and defined an individual’s will, invariably revealing his strength.

Garshin’s characters so often are faced with dilemmas and life-changing decisions. This is because of their personality and the questions they are asking themselves. His characters are morally hypersensitive, one might say, unable to escape the workings of a conscience that is attentive to most apparent wrongdoings. Isolation is a useful device for depicting such characters; it offers a plausible condition for self-examination and re-thinking social questions. But, if it focuses the individual’s energies and responses, it also leaves the character open to perform extreme, untempered actions. Whether knowingly limited by isolation or freely able to manage isolation, Garshin’s characters are as aware of their immediate condition as they are of the social question that troubles them. As each character tests ideas and strategies, moments in isolation reveal that character’s awareness of himself.
No less than happiness and sympathy, isolation is a typical occurrence in Chekhov's stories, an occurrence exemplified by his repeated (but not repetitive) attention to individuals who are denied a life force or who lack or lose that vitality. The varieties of character types and predicaments that Chekhov used to depict or cause isolation attest to the awareness the theme raised in him and the depth with which he understood the condition. In addition, Chekhov expressed this typical condition in works that ranged in size from 1000 words to nearly one hundred pages, exposing its effects and charting its borders through dialogue and narrative voices that include peasants, prostitutes, and scholars. For Chekhov, isolation had no literary end, except as a condition worthy of description. Indeed, in Chekhov's work isolation often appears as the most usual human condition, one in which characters feel pain, seek solace and reveal their humanity, among other responses.

Korolenko's characters effect a sense of optimism by their ability to endure isolation and continue to express individual spirit. In isolation his characters reveal zest for life, show their knowledge of happiness and its power to strengthen them, continue to live with integrity, overcome their limitations, and earn sympathy. His Siberian peasants and exiled members of the intelligentsia accept their isolation, while other characters seek out a lone life wilfully. The natural and ethnographic details of Siberia that stand out in Korolenko's stories regularly have an emphatic role. They do not create the isolation features that one might expect of Siberia; rather the effects of nature and Siberia parallel the feelings of a character or heighten his sense of isolation. Isolation, for Korolenko, is a social affair or personal decision.

Garshin's isolation stories show clearly the old-new content-and-form relationship in his work. He set the action and settings of his stories between
traditional moral polarities, weighing good against bad. More innovatively for the time, he sought ways to present how debates and differing viewpoints affect a character; that is, how to make a subjective rendering of that world that touches a character. In his short fiction, personal impressions on a topic were at least as important as the topic itself. If Garshin was concerned with the moment of isolation, Chekhov was trying to reveal how isolation comments on a character's entire life. With his famous economy of description and preferences for understatement and exposition, he neither openly criticised nor applauded the individuals who suffer or survive their isolation, neither emphasised isolation nor undercut its significance. Each case of isolation, for Chekhov, is an individual one. The least adventuresome of the three, Korolenko availed himself of practised, nineteenth-century literary models to portray isolation, employing, for instance, elements of the skaz tale and sketch, lyrical nature scenes and prison settings, while offering a Siberian perspective and speaking most loudly of the three young writers about the inherent optimism he found in the least significant existence.

For these three writers isolation certainly was a theme that suited the goals they set for their writing. The theme was not, however, employed in Russian short fiction more regularly or successfully in the 1880s than in previous periods of the nineteenth century. Yet I would suggest that treatments of isolation by Garshin, Chekhov and Korolenko offer a distinctly personal or individual view of isolation and its sources, responses and consequences: the stories are concerned with how the individual finds himself isolated and copes with isolation. Such topics as private conscience, individual responsibility and personal integrity occur too often in their work to be ignored, and this occurrence might more accurately suggest that their work had a particularly inward-looking focus.
It might be argued that, by their nature, short fiction and isolation go together. Surely this is a valid argument from a creative point of view. Chekhov implied as much in a letter of 27 October 1888 to Suvorin. When setting up the framework of a story, he suggested, you choose one character and emphasise only him. Chekhov did not mean that he was going to people his stories with lonely or isolated characters, however. Indeed, isolation often is completely absent from his short fiction. It is a condition that each of the writers employed selectively. As I suggested in the opening of this study, for authors, to portray isolation is to be faced with many possibilities. Within the worlds of stories isolation takes on particular meanings and forms.
### Appendix: English Texts

#### Abbreviations

Most translations refer to the following sources. I have adjusted the translations when I felt it was necessary. If no source is indicated, the translation is mine.

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Chapter One: Isolation and the Short Story

I might add, however, that if nowadays everybody is “on his own and by himself,” then there still is some link with what has gone before. Indeed, this link absolutely must exist, even if all might seem to be uncoordinated and full of mutual misunderstanding, and it is most interesting to follow this link. To put it briefly (although the comparison is an old one), our educated Russian society reminds me most of all of that ancient bundle of twigs which is strong only so long as the twigs are bound together; but as soon as the bonds are broken, the whole bundle flies apart into many weak stalks that the first wind will carry off (Dostoevsky, Diary, 398-399).

In our time -- [a time] of critical insensibility concerning the conceptions that authors themselves have about the form of their works, an unimaginable chaos has set in. “If I want, I will call it a novel; if I want, I will call it a tale -- that’s how it will be.” And they think that it is exactly what they’ve called it. Whereas, of course, it is not...

The novel and the story, even when they depict the most ordinary and hackneyed prose of everyday life, can be representative of the ultima thule of art, of the highest creative endeavor; on the other hand, in reflecting only the choice and sublime moments of life they may contain no poetry at all, no art. ... This is the widest and most universal genre [rod] of poetry; in it talent feels itself to be infinitely free. It unites in itself all the other genres of poetry -- the lyrical, as an emotional effusion of the author in connection with the event he describes, and the dramatic, as the most vivid and salient device for making the characters speak their thoughts. Digressions, disquisitions, and didactics that are intolerable in other branches of poetry have their legitimate place in the novel and the story. The novel and the story enable the writer to give full scope to the predominant peculiarities of his talents, character, tastes, tendency, and so on (“A Survey of Russian Literature in 1847: Part Two,” in Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov, 33-34).

The short story is an episode from a limitless poem of human fates. [...] a short story is a novel broken into parts, into thousands of parts; it is a chapter snatched from a novel.
The short story selects events as its topic -- events that indeed have occurred or that can occur to anyone -- an event that for some reason is remarkable in a psychological respect, [selects that event] sometimes even completely without desire to voice any moralizing, but simply to concentrate the attention of the one considering it or the spectator. [...] Sometimes the occurrence itself doesn't deserve attention and is taken up simply in order to put forward some kind of separate picture, a living, characteristic feature of a customary time, place, and manners, and sometimes [to put forward a picture] of the poet’s fancy.

может быть только ...
can be only a draughtsman with a certain reserve of style, skill and learning; but, undertaking a novel, he should also be a thinker for he must reveal the lively creations of his imagination as they relate to the present time, milieu and state of science, art and, very often, politics.

и в повести ...
in both a tale, and even a story, there must be its functional role -- for instance, to reveal that tiny corner in a depraved heart where something saintly and pure still remained intact.

Chapter Two: The Russian Short Story and Isolation, 1835-1880. An Overview

самый скверный городишко ...
the foulest little town of all Russia's seaside towns.

'Да и какое ...
And what do people's joys and disasters have to do with me, me, a journeying officer with an order for fresh post horses on a government assignment!

Я не понимаю ...
I don't know how I could've thought or imagined that I was a titular councillor.

Никоторого числа ...
There is no date. The day didn't have a date.
from different times and, ostensibly, are quite independent works, indeed, very much links them: themes that run through them, shared associations, a cluster of occurring problems, a kinship of stylistic principles, the unity of their complex make-up, and, moreover, undoubtedly the unity of the author's entire view

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Признаюсь, с недавнего ...
Honestly, in the last little while, I have started at times to hear and see things that nobody has seen or heard before.

Ну, посмотри на ...
Well, look at yourself. Just think, what are you? You're just a zero, nothing more.

Начальник отделения показал ...
The chief of our branch gave the appearance that he hadn't noticed my arrival.

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Город -- это водоворот ...
The city is a maelstrom and a whirlwind that brings everything together. At the same time it preserves and strengthens social, caste, professional, corporate and other barriers. Nowhere else does a person simultaneously feel so tied with others and so cut off as in a city. The city is at once that symbol of communicability and estrangement. This contrast in particular is grasped by the description of Nevskii Prospekt revealed in the story of the same name and, as well, in the entire cycle.

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Она взглянула на ...
She glanced at Piskarev and, at this glance, his heart trembled; she looked at him sternly; indignation appeared on her face in response to such a bold pursuit; but, on this lovely face the very anger was charming.

все в нем ...
everything in him trembled, all his feelings were afire and everything before him was cast into a fog. The pavement rushed forward beneath him, carriages with galloping horses seemed motionless, a bridge stretched out and broke at its arch, a building was over on its roof, a sentry-box toppled toward him, and a sentry's halberd together with the golden words and painted scissors of a signboard, sparkled, it seemed, on his very eyelash. And one glance caused all this, one turn of a lovely head.

лучше бы ты ...
it would be better if you were mute, without a tongue.
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Так погиб, жертва ...
Thus perished poor Piskarev, a victim of senseless passion.

Все откинувши, все ...
Having brushed everything aside, and forgotten it all, he sat with a grief-stricken and despairing look, full only with a single dream.

Если бы его ...
If anyone would have seen him sitting silently in front of an empty table or walking along the street, he would likely take him for a lunatic or someone who had been done in by strong drink.

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39Написавшия вселать, он ...
Having written to his heart's content he would lie down to sleep, already smiling at thoughts of the day to come and of what, tomorrow, God would send him to copy. In this way passed the peaceful life of a man who, on a salary 400 roubles, could be satisfied with his lot.

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Надобно сказать правду ...
I have to tell the truth, that at first it was somewhat difficult for him to get used to such limitations, but then he somehow became accustomed and things went well. He even learned to get by completely without food in the evenings. But then he was feeding spiritually, carrying in his thoughts the everlasting idea of his future overcoat. From that time it was as if his whole existence somehow became fuller, as if he was married, as if some other person was present with him, as if he wasn't alone, but that some welcome friend had agreed to travel life's road with him. And this friend was none other than that same wadded, strongly-lined, and still untouched, overcoat. He somehow became more lively, even firmer in character, like a man who has already defined and set himself a goal. All reservation and indecision -- in a word, those wavering and indefinite features -- disappeared from his face and actions.

Все это: шум ...
All of it -- the noise, the sound of voices, the crowd of people -- everything was somehow wondrous to Akakii Akakievich. He just didn't know what to do, where to put his hands, feet and the rest of his body. In the end he sat with some who were playing cards. He looked at the cards, snuck a peek at the face of this and that player, and after a few moments began to yawn and feel that it was tiresome, especially as the time when he usually went to bed had already long passed.
However, the journey was accomplished very satisfactorily; save that during the crossing of a small, recently repaired bridge, the cart carrying the cook broke down and his stomach was crushed by a rear wheel (Turgenev, F, 104).

I examined him with curiosity from my hiding-place. I confess that he produced an unpleasant impression on me. To all appearances he was the pampered valet of some rich young master. [...] His face -- ruddy, fresh-complexioned and impudent -- belonged to the category of faces which, so far as I have been able to judge, almost invariably annoy men and unfortunately, are very often pleasing to women (Turgenev, F, 171, 172).

in the Orlov province a solitary and sullen man is called Biriuk.

one cannot tolerate bad behaviour in one's own house. Better that a rotten limb should at once be cut off (Turgenev, F, 47).

"To my way of thinking, if you're a master, then be a master; if you're a muzhik, then be a muzhik. That's what!"

To so clear and convincing an argument there was, naturally, no answer (Turgenev, G, 193).

He was a fine man, and, if not for his misfortune, any woman would willingly have married him.

To this day Gerasim lives a solitary existence in his lone hut; as before, he is healthy and powerful; as before, he does the work of four men; and, as before, he is dignified and staid. Neighbours have noticed, however, that since returning from Moscow he has stopped mingling with women altogether -- he doesn't even look at them -- and he won't
keep even one dog.

Я должен сказать ...
About myself I must say, that although, of course, I am a superfluous man, I am not one by choice.

Мое самолюбие страдало ...
My self-esteem suffered inexplicably. It wasn't my conscience that tormented me; the awareness of my stupidity destroyed me. 'I, I inflicted upon myself the last, the final blow.'

Гамлет сам наносит ...
Hamlet brings wounds to himself, he torments himself; in his hands also there is a sword: the double-edged sword of analysis.

Возвращение к военным ...
In the literary environment of the 1850s the return to military themes and to descriptions of the Caucasus had to be used for opposing the new "naturalist" tendencies to the old, principally stylistic and plot-based, ones. Instead of long poems and novellas, sketches and "notes" had to appear, instead of plots -- descriptions, instead of conventional, daring heroes -- ordinary people, instead of an intense, lyrical style -- a semi-scientific, correspondent's style that is precisely and minutely acquainted with the facts.

какая-то обетованная земля ...
some kind of Promised Land for all types of unhappy people.

смотрят на Кавказ ...
look at the Caucasus no differently than through a prism of heroes of our time.

--Ведь в России ...
"You see, in Russia they somehow imagine the Caucasus majestically, with eternal, untouched ice and thunderous streams, with daggers, felt cloaks and Circassians, -- all this is something frightening and, in essence, there's nothing at all cheerful in it. If at least they knew that we never get to the untouched ice (and if we did there wouldn't be anything cheerful) and that the Caucasus is split up into provinces." [...
"Everything that I, following the legend, came to the Caucasus to be cured of, everything came with me, only it came with the difference that, before, everything was of a large degree, and now its of a small, squalid one, at each step of which I find
millions of little tensions, horrid things and insults."

page 75

Посмотришь кругом -- всё ...
You'll look around and everything will be white, bright and snowy; there'll be nothing but the blustering light and snow.

page 77

Дело было о святках ...
It was at Christmas-tide, on St Vasilii's eve. The weather had turned incredibly harsh. The severest of snowstorms and winds -- of the sort that the Trans-Volga steppe winters are known for -- had driven a great number of people into the single coaching station that stood alone amid the unchanging and endless steppe. Gentry, merchants and peasants, Russians, Mordvinians and Chuvash found themselves tossed together. On such a night it was impossible to honour ranks and social differences: wherever you turned it was crowded. Some were drying off, others were getting warm, still others were looking for any tiny space where they might find refuge. Throughout the dark, narrow, overcrowded hut hung a stuffy heat and thick steam from wet clothes. Not a free space could be seen. People were lying everywhere: on the sleeping planks, the stove, the benches and, even, on the muddy earth floor. The owner, a stern muzhik, was glad neither for the guests nor the profits. After angrily slamming the gates behind the last sleighs to make it into the yard (they carried two merchants), he locked off the yard and, having hung the key under an icon-case, declared firmly: "There, whoever wants in can bang on the gates with his head and I still won't open them."

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Это было тяжелое ...
It was a difficult silence. Both Chelnovskii and I realised that an agitator was standing before us -- a sincere and fearless agitator. And he had realised that he was understood, and suddenly exclaimed. -- What am I to do! My heart won't tolerate this civilisation, this nobleness, this upholding of crap!.. -- And he struck his chest with his fist and fell heavily into a chair.

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Это было против ...
This [action] opposed all Ryzhov's rules concerning reverence toward God and the obligations of him who is better off to be an example for the poor.

Особенно же нам ...
We Old Believers were especially pleased that, in those days when we were undergoing persecution for our observances everywhere, here there was relief.
page 80

О трогательности и отваге ...

It's likely that people thought highly of the touchingness and courage of the bloody act he performed on himself, but they decreed on him something of which I have already spoken: in him they didn't search for natural causes; rather, giving up to their fantasy, they created a mythical legend from a natural event, and made simple, generous Golovan into a mythical being, into something like a sage or a sorcerer, who possessed an invincible talisman, and who could challenge anything and never perish.

page 81

Здесь покойно, все равно ...

Its calm, it's like being in the regiment -- there's a lot that's similar: everything's prepared for you: you're dressed, given shoes, fed, and the command watches and asks for obedience.

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Мы не будем ...

We shall not attempt to explain Semen Ivanovich's fate simply as a result of his fantastical disposition; on the other hand; however, we cannot refrain from observing to the reader that our hero was an unworldly and thoroughly submissive individual, who until the day he had joined the company of his fellow borders had lived in obscure, impenetrable solitude, and had been distinguished by his quietness and even a certain mysteriousness; for he had spent the whole of the time he had lived at Peski lying on his bed behind the screen, never saying a word and communicating with no one. Both of his former room-mates had lived in exactly the same way as he: they, too, were somewhat mysterious individuals, and had also spent fifteen years lying behind their screens. In the patriarchal calm the happy, somnolent days had drifted by one after the other, and since everything around them had also followed a smooth and uneventful course neither Semen Ivanovich nor Ustinia Fedorovna could even remember exactly when fate had brought them together. 'Oh, it'll be ten years now, no, fifteen, no, twenty-five,' she would sometimes say to her new lodgers, 'since he settled down with me, poor lamb, bless his little soul.' And so it was perfectly natural that the hero of our tale, unused to company, had been most unpleasantly surprised when, just a year earlier, he had suddenly found himself, a staid and modest man, amidst a noisy, restless throng of a dozen young lads, his new room-mates and companions (Dostoevsky, Stories, 225).

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всегда вел жизнь ...

had always led a quiet and completely solitary existence.

[он торговал первый ...

he took the first tiny space that was offered to him, moving into it within the hour.
There he shut himself up as though in a monastery cell, as though he had renounced the world for good. By the end of two years he had become a complete recluse.

He had become a recluse without noticing it; during this time it never once occurred to him that there was another kind of life (Dostoevsky, Stories, 134).

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в моей скромной ...

a new lodger appeared in my modest, single-room apartment. But I wasn’t annoyed, in fact I was glad for myself. I usually live alone, completely like a recluse. [...] Having been deaf for ten years, I was, of course, used to solitude.

page 86

что мне до ...

What do I care about my former golden life, my warm attic room, my maiden’s freedom? [...] No, what grieves me and tears at my heart is that I am his degraded slave, that my shame and my degradation are sweet to me, shameless woman that I am, that my greedy heart finds it sweet to remember my suffering as though it were joy and happiness — what grieves me is that there is in my heart no strength, no anger at my humiliation! (Dostoevsky, Stories, 182)

Дай ему волшку ...

Give freedom to him, to a weak man — he’ll bind it and bring it back (Dostoevsky, Stories, 208).

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Угрюмая мысль зародилась ...

But presently a morose idea sprang to birth in my brain, and diffused itself over my body with a sort of unclean sensation which resembled what one experiences when for the first time one penetrates to the musty, musty underground (Dostoevsky, Notes, 75).

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Стою я... за свой ...

what I most stand for is my personal freewill, and for what it can do for me when I feel in the right mood to use it (Dostoevsky, Notes, 30).

... Вот, пока она ...

... So as long as she’s still here everything’s all right: every minute I go up to have a look at her; but they’ll take her away tomorrow, and how will I ever stay here by myself? (Dostoevsky, Diary, 678).
... No, in all seriousness, when they take her away tomorrow, what will become of me? (Dostoevsky, *Diary*, 717).

"Вы отвергли меня ...
"You have rejected me (you people, I mean); you have cast me out with your scornful silence. You answered my passionate longing to love you with an insult I will feel all my life. So now I am quite justified in walling myself off from you, collecting my thirty thousand rubles, and living the rest of my life somewhere in the Crimea, on the Southern Shore, amid mountains and vineyards, on my own estate,..." (Dostoevsky, *Diary*, 692).

Chapter Three: Garshin and Isolation as Literary Device

И что же ...
Really, can the traces of family calamity be wiped from one's memory? No, of course.

Мамочка, я не ...
Mother, I can't hide behind the walls of the institution when others my age are putting their brows and chests in front of bullets.

В Сербию Гаршина ...
The Russian authorities did not permit Garshin to go to Siberia, explaining that his time will come when Russia itself declares war. He was one of the first volunteers to go off to the Russo-Turkish War (Durylin).
... denied Garshin a passport, noting that Russia would soon have its own war. Garshin resumed his efforts to obtain permission for departure in Petersburg, but those efforts, too, turned out unsuccessfully (Latynina).
There's no possibility of leaving for Siberia, and I don't want to go by illegal means. Besides, there'll soon be a war, for sure there'll be.

В Сербию уехать ...
There's no chance of leaving for Serbia, and I don't want to go by an unauthorised route. In any case, there'll soon be a war; there'll be one for sure.

что "О.З." не поместят ...
that *Notes of the Fatherland* will not publish it. After all, for them everything needs to be "sensible" so the reader always remembers that the *muzhik* is suffering and that he, the reader, is a cad. This is all very well, but there are other themes, you know.
This fragment of mine doesn’t touch at all on the war, on social, political or other questions — merely on the torment of two broken souls.

If Notes of the Fatherland doesn’t publish it, I’ll send it somewhere else. It’s all the same. In any case, in March it will be published in some journal.

"page 101"

"какая-то тревожная идеальная ...
a kind of anxious ideological and vital placelessness.
По своей редкой ...
On account of his rare goodness, honesty, justice, he could not attach himself to any side and felt deeply for everyone.

"page 105"

"его герои изображаются ...
his heroes are portrayed at a critical minute of their lives — at a moment of great spiritual outburst, when they, like Dostoevsky’s heroes (Raskolnikov, Ivan Karamazov and others), must settle a thought.

"page 108"

"Во всяком случае ...
In any case, to interpret the argument of Riabinin and Dedov as an argument between defenders of social art and pure art and the story “The Artists” as the coming together of these two views on art is to lessen the work significantly.

"page 109"

образ замкнутого пространства ...
an image of closed off space, like of a prison

эгоцентрически замкнувшийся в своем маленьким «я» ...
egocentrically closed off into his own little “I”

"page 110"

Все или почти ...
All or almost all Mr Garshin’s works present an artistic commentary on something great — in all its simplicity: “it’s not so good to be alone.” I would not say that this is the root of his pessimism, but it is the soil from which the root takes its necessary elements. Our author is not always concerned with sufferings; from his viewpoint, why not suffer, but suffer in the presence of others and with others, not on your own.
Однако и не ...
However, Mr Garshin does not place loners, literally, before us. On the contrary, his loners are surrounded by a crowd, yet still they are alone, because the ties that join them with people are affected and false. They are fully conscious of this falseness and tormented because of it.

-- Страшно; не могу ...
"It's terrible, I can't go on living and fearing for my own sake. I must, I absolutely must bind myself to the common life, suffer and rejoice, hate and love not for my own "self" which consumes everything and gives nothing in return, but for the truth common to all men, which exists in the world and which, however I may have raved in that letter over there, speaks to the soul in spite of all attempts to stifle it (Garshin, Stories, 132).

Я помню, как ...
I remember we were running through a wood, bullets were whizzing past and tearing branches off the trees, we were forcing our way through hawthorn bushes. The firing was becoming heavier. There seemed to be something red flickering along the edge of the forest. Suddenly Sidorov, a young soldier in A Company ('How did he get into our line?' flitted through my mind), squatted on the ground, looking at me speechlessly with big, frightened eyes. Blood was running from his mouth. Yes, I remember that well. I also remember, in the thick bushes just by the forest's edge, seeing — him. He was a huge fat Turk, yet I ran straight at him, weak and skinny as I am. Something banged, something flew past me, it seemed enormous; a ringing started in my ears. That was him shooting me,' I thought. But with a scream of terror he pressed back against a thick hawthorn bush. He could have gone round that bush, but terrified and uncomprehending, he crawled into its thorny branches. I struck out and knocked his rifle out of his hand, then struck again and rammed my bayonet into something. There was a sound somewhere between a growl and a moan. I ran on. Our men were cheering, falling and firing. I remember firing several shots too when I got out of the wood into a clearing. Suddenly the cheering became louder and we immediately all moved forward. I mean we didn't, our unit did, because I stayed behind. I thought that was odd. What was even odder was that everything suddenly disappeared; all the shouting and the firing stopped. I couldn't hear anything and all I could see was something blue; it must have been the sky. Then that too disappeared (Garshin, Stories, 25).
“Сначала князь Андрей ...
At first, Prince Andrei, considering it his duty to rouse the courage of the soldiers and
to lead by example, strolled about the ranks. But then he became convinced that he
had, and knew of, nothing to teach them. All the powers of his soul, just like those of
every soldier, were unconsciously directed only at keeping from thinking about the
horror of their situation.

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Да, я ранен ...
That’s right, I’ve been wounded in battle (Garshin, Stories, 26).

все побежали вперед ...
Everybody ran ahead, but I couldn’t run [...] and I fell on the field.

...вдруг все исчезло ...
everything suddenly disappeared; all th shouting and the firing stopped. I couldn’t
hear anything and all I could see ws something blue; it must have been the sky. Then
that too disappeared (Garshin, Stories, 25).

Я ползу. Ноги ...
I start crawling. My legs drag, my weakened arms can hardly move my inert body
(Garshin, Stories, 29).

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[ч]то-то остroe и ...
[s]omething sharp and swift as a lightning bolt shoots right through me, from my knees
to my chest and into my head; I slump down once more (Garshin, Stories, 26).

И теперь я ...
I’m only lying here because I haven’t the strength to drag myself away (Garshin,
Stories, 30).

[н]есколько травинок, муравей ...
A few blades of grass; an ant crawling down one of them; some stalks of dead grass left
over from last year — that’s my entire world (Garshin, Stories, 25).

Солнце жжет. Я ...
The sun is burning me. I open my eyes — the same bushes, the same sky, only now in
the light of day. And there’s my neighbour. Yes, it is a Turk, a corpse (Garshin,
Stories, 28).

Мне не хочется открывать ...
I don’t want to open my eyes, because I can feel the sunlight on my closed lids: it will
burn them if I open them. Better not to move (Garshin, Stories, 27).
What will the Sun do to him today? (Garshin, Stories, 32).

Oh, you damned bushes! Why did you have to grow in such a thick wall around me? I can’t see anything through them (Garshin, Stories, 32).

If only I could stop my brain working, too! But I just can’t hold it back. Thoughts and memories jostle in my head (Garshin, Stories, 28).

I’d gladly change places with him. He’s lucky (Garshin, Stories, 28).

I didn’t mean to do it. I meant no harm to anyone when I went to fight. The idea that I too would kill people somehow escaped me. I only saw myself as exposing my breast to the bullets. And I went and did that (Garshin, Stories, 28-29).

And even though I’ve killed him, how am I to blame? Why am I to blame? (Garshin, Stories, 29).

When I got it into my head to sign up, my mother and Masha didn’t try to stop me, though they wept for me. Blinded by an idea, I didn’t see their tears. I didn’t realise — now I do — what I was doing to my nearest and dearest.

But why look back? What’s done can’t be undone.

It’s odd the way some of my acquaintances reacted to my decision. ‘What a crackpot! Doesn’t know what he’s in for!’ How could they talk like that? How does that fit in with their ideas of heroism, patriotism and that sort of thing? Because to them I embodied all those noble virtues (Garshin, Stories, 31).
Я не могу ...  
I can’t stop thinking about him. Did I really give up everything that’s sweet and dear to me, everything I love, and did I do that thousand-verst march, go hungry, suffer cold and intense heat [...] How have I furthered our cause in any way, except by committing this murder? (Garshin, *Stories*, 30-31).

Я не понимал ...  
I didn’t realise — now I do — what I was doing to my nearest and dearest (Garshin, *Stories*, 31).

Я очнулся в ...  
I’ve come round in the divisional hospital. Doctors and nurses are standing over me, and among them I can see a familiar face, that of a famous St Petersburg professor, who is bending over my legs. His hands are covered in blood. He’d doing something to my legs that doesn’t take long, then he turns to me and says:  
‘Well, Somebody’s on your side, young man! You’ll pull through. We had to take off one leg, but that’s nothing much. Can you talk?’  
I can and I tell them everything that’s written down here (Garhin, *Stories*, 35).

И он сошел ...  
And he stepped down from the porch. Glancing round but failing to notice the warder standing behind him, he strode across the flowerbed and stretched his hand towards one of the flowers, but could not bring himself to pluck it. He felt heat and a stabbing pain in his outstretched hand and then throughout his body, as if a powerful current of some force unknown to him were emanating from the red petals and striking through his entire body. He moved nearer and stretched his hand right up to the flower, but it seemed to him that the flower, in self-defence, was exhaling a lethally venomous miasma. His head began to spin; he made a last desperate effort, and had actually seized its stem when suddenly a heavy hand fell on his shoulder. The warder had seized hold of him.  
‘No picking,’ said the old Ukrainian. ‘And don’t walk on the flowerbeds. There’s a lot of you lunatics here — one flower each and you’ll strip the whole garden,’ he urged, still gripping the patient’s shoulder.  
The patient looked him straight in the face, silently shook off his hand, and walked down the path in agitation. ‘Oh, you poor unfortunates!’ he thought. ‘You cannot see, you’re so blind now that you even defend him. But whatever the cost — I shall do away with him. If not today, then tomorrow we shall match our strength. And if I perish, it’s really all the same. . .’ (Garshin, *Stories*, 205).
— Именем его императорского ...

‘In the name of His Imperial Majesty, the Sovereign Emperor Peter the First, I hereby proclaim an inspection of this lunatic asylum!’

These words were spoken in a loud, sharp, resonant voice. The hospital clerk, who had been registering the new patient in a large, ragged ledger that lay on an ink-drenched desk, could not suppress a smile. But the two young men who were escorting the patient found nothing to laugh at; they could barely stand after two sleepless days and nights closeted with the lunatic whom they had just brought in by train. At the last station but one, his violent attacks had worsened; they had procured a straitjacket from somewhere and, calling the guards and a policeman to help, got the patient into it. And thus they brought him to the town; and thus they delivered him to the hospital (Garshin, Stories, 197).

Он очнулся ночью ...

He awoke in the night. All was quiet; [...] ‘Where am I? What’s wrong with me?’ he wondered. And suddenly, with extraordinary vividness, the past month of his life rose up before him, and he understood that he was sick and what his sickness was. A succession of absurd thoughts, words and deeds recurred to him, sending shudders through his whole being. ‘But that’s all over, thank God, all over!’ he whispered, and fell asleep again. [...] there was not a sign of insanity about him now. This was the deep, heavy sleep of an exhausted man, dreamless, motionless, almost breathless. For a few moments he awoke, in full possession of his faculties, as if he were normal, only to rise from his bed in the morning as mad as ever (Garshin, Stories, 200).

Он сознавал, что ...

He was aware of being in a lunatic asylum; he was even aware that he was sick. Sometimes, as on the first night, he would wake in the hush, after a long day of tumultuous motion, with a wrenching ache in every limb and a frightful heaviness in his head, but in full possession of his faculties. Perhaps it was the absence of sensations in the nocturnal calm and the dim light; perhaps it was the reduced brain activity of a man barely awake — but at such moments he clearly understood his situation and seemed to be sane. Then daybreak would come, and with the light and the arousal of life in the hospital he would once again be engulfed in a surge of sensations; his sick brain was overwhelmed and he was mad once more (Garshin, Stories, 203).

Это было большое ...

It was a large stone edifice, built in the old governmental style. Two large rooms — a dining-hall and a common room for the quieter patients — a wide corridor with a French window that looked out onto a flower-garden, and some twenty separate rooms allocated to the patients, occupied the ground floor; and here there were also two dark
rooms, one with padded walls and one panelled with wood, to which violent patients were consigned, and a huge, dismal, vaulted chamber that was the bathroom. The upper storey was for the women (Garshin, Stories, 198).

Открытое окно с ...
The open window with its iron bars looked out onto a secluded corner between the big buildings and a stone wall. No one went to that corner, and it was densely overgrown with uncultivated shrubs and with lilac which was blooming lushly at that time of year ...

Я достиг реально ...
I have attained in reality what philosophy has only postulated. I experience in my own self the great concept that space and time are mere fictions. I live in every age. I live where space does not exist, everywhere or nowhere, as you will. And therefore it’s all the same to me whether you confine me here or give me liberty, whether I am free or bound (Garshin, Stories, 201).

Писарь больницы, записывавший ...
The hospital clerk, who had been registering the new patient in a large, ragged ledger that lay on an ink-drenched desk, could not suppress a smile. But the two young men who were escorting the patient found nothing to laugh at; they could barely stand after two sleepless days and nights closeted with the lunatic whom they had just brought in by train. At the last station but one, his violent attacks had worsened; they had procured a straitjacket from somewhere and, calling the guards and a policeman to help, got the patient into it. And thus they brought him to the town; and thus they delivered him to the hospital (Garshin, Stories, 197).

Но эта попытка ...
But this effort sapped all his strength. He was exhausted from suffering; his nerves could not endure the excessive strain, and the border between reality and reverie fell away. And again he was away in a world without time and space. For the second time, madness had set in.

необыкновенно яркий алый ...
extraordinarily vivid scarlet flower, a variety of poppy (Garshin, Stories, 202).

чуть не отшатнулся ...
almost recoiled in fear, so wild was the malice and hatred that burned in those demented eyes (Garshin, Stories, 202).
But the patient, needless to say, endowed the red cross with a particular cryptic significance (Garshin, *Stories*, 205).

He removed his cap and looked at the cross, then at the poppies. The flowers were the brighter.

'It's winning,' the patient said, 'but we shall see' (Garshin, *Stories*, 205).

He had almost forgotten about the flowers, but mounting the porch as he left the garden, in the densely darkening grass that was already touched with early dew, he saw once again the likeness of two red embers. Then the patient lagged behind the crowd and, placing himself behind the warder, bided his time. No one saw him spring across the flowerbed, seize a flower and hastily hide it down the front of his shirt against his breast. When the fresh, dewy leaves touched his body, he turned pale as death and opened his eyes wide in horror. A cold sweat broke out on his forehead (Garshin, *Stories*, 205-206).

In his eyes, the flower embodied all evil. It had soaked up all the innocent blood ever spilled (which was why it was so red), all the tears, all the bile of mankind. [...] He hoped that by morning the flower would have lost all its power. Its evil would have passed into his breast, his soul, and there would be conquered or conquer — then he would perish, but perish an honourable warrior, the foremost warrior of mankind, because no one hitherto had dared to grapple with all the evil of the world at once (Garshin, *Stories*, 207-208).

He picked the flower because he perceived that deed as the act of heroism which he was bound to perform. At first glance through the French windows, the scarlet petals had attracted his attention and from that moment he believed he had comprehended perfectly what he was to accomplish on earth (Garshin, *Stories*, 207).

They would not allow him out into the garden; the doctor, seeing that he was continuing to lose weight, was still not sleeping and kept roaming about, prescribed a sizable injection of morphine. He did not resist; fortunately, his deranged thoughts now somehow concurred with this procedure. He was soon asleep (Garshin, *Stories*, 208).
He felt heat and a stabbing pain in his outstretched hand and then throughout his body, as if a powerful current of some force unknown to him were emanating from the red petals and striking through his entire body. He moved nearer and stretched his hand right up to the flower, but it seemed to him that the flower, in self-defence, was exhaling a lethally venomous miasma (Garshin, *Stories*, 205 -- my emphasis).

'You cannot see, you're so blind now that you even defend him' (Garshin, *Stories*, 205).

They didn't see it. I saw it (Garshin, *Stories*, 208).

But the patient, needless to say, endowed the red cross with a particular cryptic significance (Garshin, *Stories*, 205).

And he lay, his strength ebbing in an illusory, spectral combat, but ebbing nonetheless (Garshin, *Stories*, 208).

Chapter Four: Chekhov and Isolation as Typical Occurrence

Everything came easily to Chekhov, inadmissibly easily, without effort, without any kind of correction. Legends circulated among the young people at *Fragments* about the lightness of Chekhov's pen: witnesses maintained that Chekhov wrote *stsenki* and stories for Leikin as clean first drafts, that he worked almost incidentally, even when guests were around, distracted for a minute or two to jot down a phrase that had just come to him.

And he thought about there ... There, now, there isn't dirty snow beneath your feet, there isn't cold puddles, instead there is young, green growth. There, the wind doesn't beat at your face like a wet rag, but carries the air of spring ... The sky there isn't dark, but starry, with a white streak to the east ... Instead of this dirty fence there is a green front garden and his little home with three windows. Beyond the windows are bright, warm rooms. In one of those is a table, covered with a white tablecloth with Easter cakes, snacks and wines ...
Здесь буду служить ...

"So I'll be working here. My boss, they say, is a real swine; well, the Hell with him! I'll get used to it, somehow. He has the same surname as you. And what about yourself? You must be a 5 now, eh?"

"So... So you, it seems, will be the secretary assigned to me?" said the fat man in a low voice, suddenly puffing up like an Indian rooster. -- If you appear at work late, my kind sir... If you're late...

"Y-y...you? It's you?... I, your Excellency..."

The thin man suddenly went pale; but then his whole face twisted itself into an enormous grin... He himself shrank, bent double, grew even thinner... And all his cases, bundles and band-boxes shrank and shrivelled, too... His wife's long chin grew even longer, Nathaniel sprang to attention and did up all the buttons on his uniform...

"Your Excellency, I --" (adjusted version of Chekhov, ES, 17).

A мужик простой ...

But a peasant's just a simple fellow, he doesn't know any better, so he must do what I tell him -- 'cause it's for his own good (Chekhov, ES, 54).

По какому полному ...

What perfect right has that mob got to be assembled there? I ask myself. Where's it written down that common folk can go around in droves? (Chekhov, ES, 53).

Обидно стало, что ...

It made me wild. It really got me, to think of the common people of today indulging in licence and insubordination like that, so I let fly and -- not hard of course, just lightly like, just proper, so's he wouldn't dare say such things about your Honour again... The officer sided with the elder. So i gave the officer one, too... And that's how it started... I got worked up, your Honour. But you can't get anywhere without a few clouts, can you? If you don't clout a stupid man, it's a sin on your own head. Especially if there's good reason for it -- if he's been causing a disturbance... (Chekhov, ES, 55).

Намедни по избам ...

The other day he went round the huts ordering everyone to stop singing and put all their lights out. "There's no law permitting you to sing songs," he says (Chekhov, ES, 53).

выйдя из камеры ...

when he comes out of the courtroom he sees some peasants huddled together talking about something and by force of a habit which he can no longer control, he squares his shoulders and bawls in a hoarse, irate voice:

"You lot -- break it up! Move along! Diss-perse!" (Chekhov, ES, 56).
A to i sam ... 
Or maybe I'll settle your hash for you without troubling His Honor. If I just catch you fishing I'll give it you in the neck so you'll lose your appetite for fish till Judgment Day (Chekhov, PC, 79).

— Он бедный, а ... 
He is poor, but you — the Lord be praised! — you have a mill of your own, and orchards, and you trade in fish. The Lord has given you wisdom, He has raised you above all and given you bounty — and you are all alone. But Vasya has four children, and I, the accursed one, am a burden to him, and all he earns is even rubles (Chekhov, PC, 83).

Всем ты у ... 
You've been blessed in everything. You're clever and handsome and you are a prince among merchants, but you're not human. You're unfriendly, you never smile or say a kind word, you're as pitiless as a beast. [...] Boys and girls are afraid to come near it [the mill], all creatures keep clear of you (Chekhov, PC, 83-84).

Мельник оглядел его ... 
The miller examined it, rubbed it between his fingers and, groaning and getting purple, handed it to his mother (Chekhov, PC, 85).

"Я для тебя ... 
To you I'm a wild man, and to me you're just a simple girl who doesn't understand anything. Call that a match? I'm free, I'm mollycoddled, I come and go as I please, and you're a working-girl, you trudge around in bast shoes all day, you live in dirt, your back's always bent (Chekhov, ES, 43).

Паша легла и ... 
Pasha lay down and sobbed loudly. She was already beginning to regret giving away her things in the heat of the moment, and she felt hurt. She remembered how three years ago, for no rhyme or reason, a merchant had given her a beating, and sobbed even louder (Chekhov, ES, 114).
Колпаков не стеснялся ...
Kolpakov was not afraid of being seen by postmen or Pasha's girl friends, but to be on the safe side he gathered up his clothes and went into the connecting room, while Pasha ran to open the door (Chekhov, ES, 110).

Его хотят арестовать ...
They mean to arrest him. That's what you've succeeded in doing! (Chekhov, ES, 111).

Убить эту мерзавку ...
Which am I to do: kill this vile creature or go down on my knees to her? (Chekhov, ES, 113).

Бог всё видит ...
God sees everything! He is just! (Chekhov, ES, 111).

молодая, красивая, благородно ...
young, beautiful, dressed like a lady and judging by her appearance highly respectable (Chekhov, ES, 110).

И ей казалось ...
And it seemed to her that if she were thin and not made up and did not have the quiff, she might have concealed the fact that she was not respectable, and would not have felt so terrified and ashamed standing in front of this mysterious, unknown lady (Chekhov, ES, 111).

Она чувствовала, что ...
She felt that this pale, beautiful lady, who was expressing herself so nobly that she might have been on stage, really was capable of going down on her knees to her, precisely because she was so proud and noble and wanted to exalt herself and humiliate the chorus-girl (Chekhov, ES, 113).

Нам нельзя не ...
We're not allowed to say no (Chekhov, ES, 113).

"Более широкое понимание ...
A broader understanding of this type of siuzhet — of it as a paradoxical, internally contradictory disclosure of the hero's character, one that's not necessarily tied to the hero's subjective discovery or perception — significantly broadens this group of works.
И токарь плачет ...
And the turner cries; not so much from pity as from frustration. He thinks to himself, how quickly everything in this world is over! His misfortune had scarcely begun before it had reached its conclusion. He had had no time to live with the old woman again, to talk to her properly, feel sorry for her, before she was dead. He had lived with her for forty years — yet these forty years had passed by in a kind of fog. Through all his drinking, brawling and poverty he had lost sight of life itself. And, as ill luck would have it, the old woman had died at the very time when he felt pity for her, when he felt that he could not live without her, that he had wronged her grievously (Chekhov, ES, 60).

Вечерние сумерки. Крупный...
Evening twilight. Large flakes of wet snow are circling lazily about the street lamps which have just been lighted, settling in a thin soft layer on roofs, horses’ backs, peoples’ shoulders, caps. Iona Potapov, the cabby, is all white like a ghost. As hunched as a living body can be, he sits on the box without stirring. If a whole snowdrift were to fall on him, even then, perhaps, he would not find it necessary to shake it off. His nag, too, is white and motionless. Her immobility, the angularity of her shape, and the sticklike straightness of her legs make her look like a penny gingerbread horse. She is probably lost in thought (Chekhov, PC, 118-119).

не найдется ли ...
Isn’t there someone among those thousands who will listen to him? (Chekhov, PC, 123).

но толпы бегут ...
But the crowds hurry past, heedless of him and his grief (Chekhov, PC, 123).

Эти слова, простые ...
These simple ordinary words were spoken in simple human language, yet Ogaryov turned away from Vera in utter confusion, stood up, and felt his confusion change to fear (Chekhov, ES, 137).

Весь мир, казалось ...
The whole world seemed to be made up of nothing but black silhouettes and floating white shapes, and Ogaryov, who was seeing a misty moonlit August night for practically the first time in his life, felt that he was looking not at nature but at some stage set (Chekhov, ES, 132).
Ognev, who had not seen many women in his lifetime, thought her beautiful (Chekhov, ES, 133).

I'm twenty-nine and I've never had a single romance. Not a single romantic episode in my whole life — so I only know about such things as garden trysts, avenues of sighs, and kisses at second-hand (Chekhov, ES, 134).

Probably because I've never had the time, but maybe because I've simply not come across the kind of women who... The fact is, I don't have many friends and I never go out (Chekhov, ES, 134).

Unused to travel and to people (Chekhov, ES, 134).

An impotence of the soul, an inability to respond deeply to beauty, and the premature onset of old age due to his upbringing, his desperate struggle to earn a living and his bachelor existence in furnished rooms (Chekhov, ES, 141).

In an attempt to rouse his feelings, he locked at Verochka's attractive figure, her plait and the prints left by her small feet on the dusty track, he relived her words and tears, but all this he found no more than touching; it did not inflame his soul (Chekhov, ES, 140).

For the first time in his life he had learned from experience how little a man's actions depend on his good will, and had found himself in the position of a decent, sincere man, who against his will caused cruel and unwarranted suffering to his neighbour (Chekhov, ES, 140).

He knew nothing of fallen women except by hearsay and from books, and he had never in his life been to the houses in which they live. He knew that there are immoral women who, under the pressures of fatal circumstances -- environment, bad education, poverty, and so on -- are forced to sell their honor for money. They know nothing of pure love, have no children, have no civil rights; their mothers and sisters weep over them as thought they were dead, science treats of them as evil, men address them with
contemptuous familiarity (Chekhov, PC, 222).

page 186

Воображение Васильева рисовало ...
Vasilyev's imagination was picturing how, in another ten minutes, he and his friends would knock at a door; how by little dark passages and dark rooms they would steal in to the women; how, taking advantage of the darkness, he would strike a match, would light up and see a martyred face with a guilty smile. [...] It would all be dreadful, but interesting and novel (Chekhov, PC, 225).

Приятели с Трубной ...
The friends proceeded from Trubnoy Square to Grachevka, and soon reached the side street which Vasilyev only knew by reputation. Seeing two rows of houses with brightly lighted windows and wide-open doors, and hearing gay strains of pianos and violins, sounds which floated out from every door and formed a strange medley, as though an unseen orchestra were tuning up in the darkness above the roofs, Vasilyev was suprised and said:
"What a lot of houses!" (Chekhov, PC, 225-226).

page 187

Извозчики сидели на ...
The cabmen were sitting on their boxes as calmly and indifferently as in any other side street; there were passers-by on the sidewalks as in other streets. No one was hurrying, no one was hiding his face in his coat-collar, no one shook his head reproachfully (Chekhov, PC, 226).

Ему казалось, что ...
It seemed to him that he was seeing not fallen women, but beings belonging to a different world quite apart, alien to him and incomprehensible; if he had seen this world before on the stage, or read of it in a book, he would not have believed it could exist (Chekhov, PC, 232).

Ему уж казалось ...
It seemed to him hot and stifling, and his heart began pounding slowly but violently, like a hammer -- one! two! three!
"Let us go away!" he said, pulling the artist by his sleeve (Chekhov, PC, 231-232).

page 188

У Васильева стучало ...
Vasilev's heart was pounding and his face burned. He felt ashamed before these visitors of his presence here, and he felt disgusted and miserable. He was tormented by the thought that he, a decent and affectionate person (such as he had hitherto considered himself), hated these women and felt only repelled by them (Chekhov, PC, 234).
И ему захотелось ...
And he longed for one evening to live as his friends did, to open out, to free himself from his own control (Chekhov, PC, 224).

Однако же, вот ...
“So he knew how to get his partner’s story out of her,” thought Vasilyev about the medical student. “But I don’t know how.”
“Gentlemen, I am going home!” he said.
“What for?”
“Because I don’t know how to behave here. Besides, I am bored, disgusted. What is there amusing in it?” (Chekhov, PC, 233).

Он многоего не понимал ...
There was much he did not understand about these houses, the souls of ruined women were a mystery to him as before; but it was clear to him that the situation was far worse than could have been believed. [...] They [the women] were not on the road to ruin, but ruined (Chekhov, PC, 238).

Начинается у меня ...
“It’s beginning,” he thought, “I am going to have an attack of nerves” (Chekhov, PC, 241).

Диссертация, отличное сочинение ...
The dissertation, the excellent work he had written already, the people he loved, the salvation of fallen women -- everything that only the day before he had cared about or been indifferent to, now when he thought of it irritated him ... (Chekhov, PC, 245).

Мне только хотелось ...
All I meant to do was make use of my knowledge to depict the vicious circle that causes even a kind and intelligent man who enters it -- despite his resolve to accept life from God as it is and think of everyone according to Christian precepts -- to mumble and grumble like a slave whether he means to or not and speak ill of people even when he is forcing himself to say nice things about them. He wishes to stand up for his students, but all that comes out is hypocrisy and Resident-style abuse (Chekhov, Letters, 150).

С детства я ...
I’ve been used to holding out against external pressures since boyhood, I’ve steeled myself pretty well. Such disasters in life as fame, reaching the top of one’s profession,
abandoning modest comfort for living above one’s means, acquaintance with celebrities and all that — these things have barely touched me, I’ve kept a whole skin (Chekhov, Dreary, 55).

Просто у вас ...
Your eyes have been opened, that’s all, and you’ve seen what, for some reason, you once preferred to ignore (Chekhov, Dreary, 59).

page 196

Самое лучшее и ...
The greatest, the most sacred right of kings is the right of pardon, and I’ve always felt like a king because I’ve availed myself of this right up to the limit. I’ve never judged, I’ve been indulgent, I’ve gladly forgiven all and sundry. [...] Throughout my life my sole concern has been to make my company tolerable to my family, students, colleagues and servants (Chekhov, Dreary, 58).

page 197

Но теперь уж ...
But now I’m a king no longer. Something is going on inside me -- some process fit only for slaves (Chekhov, Dreary, 58).

Как 20-30 лет ...
On the brink of death my interests are just the same now as they were twenty or thirty years ago — purely scientific and scholarly.

Even at my last gasp I shall still believe that learning is the most important, splendid and vital thing in man’s life, that it always has been and always will be the highest manifestation of love, and that it alone can enable man to conquer nature and himself. Thought the belief may be naive and based on incorrect premisses, it’s not my fault if I hold this faith and no other. Nor can I shake this conviction within me (Chekhov, Dreary, 42-43).

page 198

Работает он от ...
He slogs away morning noon and night, reads a great deal, and has a good memory for what he has read, in which respect he’s a real treasure. [...] outside his own special field he’s like a baby, he’s so naive (Chekhov, Dreary, 39).

page 199

произошла в обеих ...
A great change has taken place in them both, but I have missed the long process by which it occurred, so no wonder I can’t make sense of anything (Chekhov, Dreary, 55).
Having no time to attend to her upbringing, I only observed her sporadically, which is why I can’t say much about her childhood (Chekhov, *Dreary*, 46).

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He knows all the best people, having been on terms of intimacy with every celebrated Russian scholar of the last twenty-five or thirty years at least (Chekhov, *Dreary*, 33).

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I often enjoy watching a little boy and girl, both with fair hair and torn clothes, as they climb the fence and laugh at my hairless pate. In their gleaming little eyes I read the words: ‘Go up, thou bald head.’ They must be pretty well the only people who care nothing for my fame and rank (Chekhov, *Dreary*, 69).

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Help me! [...] You’re my father, aren’t you? My only friend? You’re clever, well educated, you’ve had a long life. You’ve been a teacher. Tell me what to do (Chekhov, *Dreary*, 82).

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Arrest, exile in the tsarist time not only did not break his spirit and his irreproachable conscience (in fact in those days in the press they called him “the conscience of modern-day Russia”), but hardened and concentrated his integrity and humanity.

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Although furnished with numerous words of provision (“at least,” “be that as it may,” and “all the same”), since my friend’s discussion obviously concerned me, from an understandable feeling of modesty, I moved a bit away from the window. The sounds of the couple’s exchange were growing louder, but after a minute Andrei Ivanovich ran out through the gate. He was a bit red-faced and agitated, but his appearance expressed animation and triumph.
To me personally, this great and fine writer said much about the Russian people that no one before him had been able to say. He spoke with the quiet voice of a sage, who knows perfectly that all wisdom is relative and that there is no eternal truth.

Each person goes along his own road, and who knows ... maybe it's good that your road crossed ours. It is good for you, amice, to have in your chest a piece of humane heart instead of a cold stone [...].

"You don't understand, of course, because you are still young... So, I'll tell you briefly, and sometime you'll recall the words of the philosopher Tyburtsii: if sometime you have to judge this one here, then remember that there was a time when you both were fool-happy and played together ... that then you walked the road along which others in breeches with a good supply of provisions walked, but that he ran along his like a ragamuffin, trouserless, and with an empty tummy.

Two or three lights could be glimpsed from the scattered huts. In places against the background of the black forest curled a bit of smoke in the damp air, and sparks flew up and went out, actually wasting away in the darkness. Finally the last lodging was left behind. All that surrounded us was the black taiga and the dark night.

And all around everything stood still. The rocky shore of the river, the pale huts of the settlement, the tiny church, the snowy smooth surface of the meadows, the dark strip of taiga — everything plunged into a boundless cloudy sea. The roof of the hut on which I'm standing as my dog presses up against my leg, with its crudely put together clay chimney, seems like an island that's been tossed among a never-ending, shapeless ocean... It's completely quiet... It's cold and terrible... The night has concealed itself, seized by a horror that is quick and intense.

And the snow piled up, covering the earth, and, more and more, melancholy covered my heart.

The river, across which was thrown the bridge I referred to, flowed from one pond and
into another. Thus, from the north and the south the town had defended itself with broad watery surfaces and marshes. Year in and year out the ponds grew shallow, were overgrown with greenery, and tall, thick reeds rippled, like the sea, in the huge bogs. In the middle of one such pond was an island, and on the island was an old, run-down castle.

А в бурные ...
And on stormy fall nights, when the giant poplars swung and hummed from the wind that had flown down from the ponds, terror spilled over from the old castle and reigned over all the town.

Jose-Maria-Miguel-Diaz ... Jose-Maria-Miguel-Diaz sensed that everything inside him trembled and was agitated, like the sea.

page 222

Нас ввели в ...
They led us into a corridor of one of the Siberian prisons that was long, narrow and dismal.

page 223

Собственно держат его ...
Strictly speaking, they’re keeping him in solitary confinement for not recongizing the authorities, for rudeness. Whoever comes, whether it’s the police-chief or even the governor himself, he will show him rudeness. It’s all his: “Unlawful ones are servants of the Antichrist!” Every time it’s the same ... Before, he walked freely throughout the prison, without any hindrance.

page 224

Вообще, когда мне ...
Generally, whenever I have to hear or read a comparison of Siberia with pre-reform Russia — a comparison that one time was in fashion — a sharp distinction occurs to me. This distinction is embodied in the appearance of the portly figure of my humorist friend. The fact is that in pre-reform Russia there wasn’t the closeness of post-reform Russia, but in Siberia there is this closeness, and it generates that ironic attitude to its own conditions that you can run into in Siberia even among people who are not that cultured.

page 225

Эх, батюшка, Иван ...
“Hey, my dear fellow, Ivan Semenych!” urged the station master, a plump, good-natured man with whom I’d managed to strike up friendly relations during personal trips. “Really and truly, this is my advice to you: Forget about it — don’t travel into the
night. Them and their business! Your life is more valuable than others' money. Right now there are rumours for 100 versts about your proceedings and the money. I shouldn't wonder if the cormorants have started to rush about. Stay the night!..

Жизнь моя совсем ...
My life followed completely a different path, and thus it seems that everything was long ago. People -- superiors -- really hurt me. And, moreover, God took from me: my young wife and son died within an hour of each other. I had no parents -- I was left alone in the world, without a relative or a friend. The priest, he cleared away my last possessions for the funeral. And so I started to think. I thought and thought and finally, um, and became unsteady in my faith. In the old faith; I still haven’t acquired a new one. Of course, my cause is a sombre one. I’m poorly schooled in reading and writing. I don’t fully trust my reasoning... And anguish stole me from these thoughts, that is, that terrible anguish, when it seems that you’d be glad not to be living anywhere on the world... I gave up my hut, there was some farm equipment — I flung it all away... For supplies I took a sheepskin jacket, trousers, a pair of boots, carved out a walking stick in the taiga, and set off...

[...] I watch everything — how people live, how they pray to God, how they believe ... I looked for upright people.

page 226

Мой сожитель уехал ...
My house-mate had left. I had to spend the evening alone in our hut.

page 227

и поднялись ребята ...
and the lads got up immediately, as if they were one.

page 231

Вы в дурном ...
You’re in bad company! ... I feel sorry, very much feel sorry for the son of respectable parents who won’t spare his family honour.

Вообще все меня ...
In general everyone called me a drifter, a good-for-nothing little boy.

С шести лет ...
From the age of six I had already experienced the horror of isolation.

page 234

Как это случилось ...
How it happened, he did not notice. He knew that something should go out of him, and he waited for it to go out at any moment. ... But nothing went out.
Meantime, he realized that he had already died, and therefore he lay quietly, without moving. He lay for a long time — so long that he got bored (Proffer 311).

page 235

Он нес его ...
He had carried it because hope kept beckoning ahead, like a small star in the fog (Proffer 326).

page 238

глуhaя слободка Чалган ...
backwoods settlement of Chalgan — was lost in the remote Yakut taiga (Proffer 300).

tот самый Макар ...
the same Makar upon whose head, as the prover says, all troubles fall (Proffer 300).

page 239

Ему пришла в ...
A happy thought occurred to him. He got up and put on his torn sina (fur coat).
His wife, a solid, sinewy, remarkably strong and just as remarkably ugly woman, who knew all of his guileless impulses through and through, guessed his intention this time too.
“Where are you going, you devil? You want to drink vodka alone again?”
“Shut up! I'll buy one bottle. We'll drink it together tomorrow.” He banged her on the shoulder so hard she staggered, and he winked slyly. Such is the female heart: she knew that Makar would definitely trick [naduet] her, but she gave in to the warmth of a conjugal caress (Proffer 302).

page 243

Я видел в ...
I saw in him only a young life filled with energy and strength, passionately dying to be free.
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