The Superfluous and the Colonised: Self-Colonisation in Russian Literature

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Written by

Jeppe Heino Hansen

Under the supervision of

Dr. Isobel Palmer & Dr. Berny Sèbe

Department of Modern Languages

College of Arts and Law

University of Birmingham

September 2024

Corrections submitted 18.02.2025

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham Research Archive

e-theses repository

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the narrative of self-colonisation and discourses of empire in Russian literature from the imperial and Soviet eras. Over the course of the period of concern (1790-1959), the Russian Empire went from being submerged with policies of Europeanisation to Pan-Slavism before being engulfed by the Bolshevik ideology after October 1917. While self-colonisation remained a serious factor in Russian policy during these epochs, it took different forms, and the dissertation tracks the development of self-colonisation discourses as they went from concerning high ranking individuals in the early 1800s to concerning the vast proletarian masses in the Soviet era. Simultaneously, the dissertation will track the expansion of the Russian borders and show the interconnectedness between Russia's modes of colonisation: External- and internal colonisation, and self-colonisation. While these are connected, and sometimes occur in the same spaces, I argue that it is important to draw distinctions between the victims of the three modes of colonisation, especially given that racism was an important element in the justification of external- and internal colonisation, while it remained completely absent from self-colonisation.

The narrative of self-colonisation emerged in Russian historiography in the nineteenth century and created a sense of victimhood amongst the Russian population, which had a profound impact on Russian identity. This dissertation uses postcolonial theory to shed light on the issues of Russian identity, which the nation's authors represented in their literary works and reveals that while authors generally approved of the colonising nature of 'their' Empire, they disapproved of the suffering of Russia's peasants at the hands of the same Empire. The development of this phenomenon is described in Part I, "Self-Othering in Centre and Periphery: The Perception of Self in Russian Imperial Era Literature (1790-1916)," where first Alexandr Radishchev's *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* criticises the Empire's conduct in both centre and periphery, while Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* and Nikolai Leskov's *The Enchanted Wanderer* show a remarkable disregard for the experience of Russia's colonised subjects. The last literary work of concern in Part I, Andrei Belyi's *Petersburg*, uses racial stereotypes to create the otherness of the Russian population, namely its workers, which foregrounds the representation of the superfluous masses in Soviet Era dissident literature analysed in Part II, "Othering the Masses: Individuality and Collective Representation in Soviet Era Dissident Literature (1925-1959)." Here, analyses of Mikhail Bulgakov's *A Dog's Heart*, Andrei Platonov's *The Foundation Pit*, and Varlam Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales* show how the concern of the Russian authors was completely turned towards the Russian self, and that issues of race had almost completely vanished from literary production.

The examination of the narrative of self-colonisation in literature reveals that these authors showed a remarkable tendency to orientalise their homeland and the Russians who lived at the Empire's core. The central literary topic at the heart of this research is the superfluous man, who is studied as a character alienated by imperialist ideology and discourse. Over the course of the thesis, superfluity develops from concerning very few individuals to concerning the masses such as the Empire's enserfed peasants and the Soviet Union's so-called *kulaki*. The examination of this phenomenon and its influence on Russian literary production, finds that tropes such as self-othering and self-Orientalism are not only recurring in Russian imperial and Soviet era literature, but that they tend to serve different functions: Sometimes they comment on the hardships of the nation's peasants, sometimes they criticise existing narratives by mimicking imperial decrees, and sometimes they highlight the perception of Russians as 'other' by comparing them with perceived 'uncivilised' peoples at the borders of the Russian Empire.

The narrative of self-colonisation shows that Russian intellectuals were occupied with questions of their own identity, which is also evident in literary production. However, the connection between these phenomena remains unexplored in academia. This is noteworthy, especially given that the narrative of self-colonisation, which materialises itself in Russian literature through discourses of self-Orientalism and self-othering, is consistent in Russian literary history, as this dissertation argues. Thus, by drawing even closer connections between Russian literature and empire than have been drawn before, this dissertation fills in a significant gap in research of Russian literature

A Note on Style and Transliteration

I use the Cambridge University Library's transliteration of Cyrillic where appropriate. That is, when referring to an author in a footnote, I will not change the transliteration of the author's name normally written in Cyrillic, if their name is stylised differently in that particular publication. Furthermore, I do not change the transliteration system used in literary or academic works when quoting. Quotes will be kept in the same style as the author or translator originally used.

For referencing, I use a variation of the MHRA style guide. The first time I cite a source, the whole reference is presented including all the information available about the edition such as location, publisher, year of publication, translator(s), editor(s) etc. For subsequent citations of the same source, only part of the title and the page number is presented. That is, the first time I refer to "Mikhail Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time and Princess Ligovskaya*, translated by Martin Parker, revised by Neil Cornwell, (Richmond: Alma Classics, 2016)," it is stylised as shown including a potential page number written as "p. 1." If I refer to the whole work, I do not provide page numbers. The second and every subsequent time the same work is cited, it will be presented in shorter form: Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time…* p. 1. The full references are also found in the bibliography.

Table of Content

Introduction: Self-Othering and Superfluity in Russian Literature...6

Russia as an Empire: The Intersections of Russia's Modes of Colonisation………………….......8

Concerning Methodology: Self-Colonisation in Russian Literature…………………………15

Tracking the Superfluous and the Colonised…………………………………………………21

Part I: Self-Othering in Centre and Periphery: The Perception of Self in Russian Imperial Era Literature (1790-1916)………………………………………………………………………………………...28

Chapter I: On the Road to Superfluity: Dissecting Russian Coloniality through *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*……..…..29

Initiating Contact: The (Mis-)identification of the Peasant and the Realisation of Injustice.....31

Orientalising Russia: Self-Orientalism and Superfluity in *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*……………………………………………………………………………………39

Chapter II: The Main Root of All Evil: The Superfluous Man and the 'Inverted Hybrid' in *A Hero of Our Time*………………..………………………………………………………47

Interpreting Pechorin: The Superfluous Coloniser..……………………………………….50

The Centrality of All Evil: Pechorin as a Superfluous Decembrist …………………….…….54

Exposing the Ambiguity of the Russian Coloniser: Pechorin as an 'Inverted Hybrid'……….63

Chapter III: The Slave and the Oppressor: The 'Russian Paradox' in the *Enchanted Wanderer*……………………………………………………………….……………………..74

Questioning the Empire: Leskov, Realism, and the *Narodnichestvo*..………………………76

In-Between Superfluity and 'Newness': Mixing Realism with Folklore……………….........83

Orientalising the Core and Periphery: A Parable of the 'Russian Paradox'.............................87

Chapter IV: Re-Centering the 'Petersburg Text': The Synthesis of Centre and Periphery in *Petersburg*……………………………………………………………………….……......95

Creating Something out of Nothing: The Genesis of St. Petersburg…………………….........98

Bringing the Periphery to *Petersburg*: A Reconsideration of the 'Petersburg Text'………...104

The Nondescript Stranger of Uncertain Status with the Little Black Moustache: The Stereotype of the Revolutionary Puppet, Alexandr Ivanovich Dudkin……………………..……......108

Destroying Dichotomies or How the Appollonian and Dionysian Synthesise.......................116

Part II: Othering the Masses: Individuality and Collective Representation in Soviet Era Dissident Literature (1925-1954)…...123

Chapter V: Creating a Human: The Conflicting Civilising Missions in *A Dog's Heart*……124

Replacing 'I' with 'We': The Role of the Self in the Transition to Soviet Self-Colonisation…………………………………………………………………………...126

How the Narrative Deprives Sharikov of Selfhood………………………….....................132

How the Professor and Shvonder Deprive Sharikov of Selfhood………………..................136

Chapter VI: Losing Selfhood to Ideology: Individual and Collective Superfluity in *The Foundation Pit*……………………………………..…………………………………142

Individual Superfluity: The Production Novel and the Superfluous Man………...................144

Eliminating a Class: The Othering Discourse of Dekulakisation…………………………......148

Collective Superfluity: Peasant Representation in *The Foundation Pit*…………………..….154

Chapter VII: Transferring Superfluity Between Worlds: The Impact of Documentary Prose in *Kolyma Tales*………………………………………………………......................................159

To Colonise or to Punish?..162

Writing After Kolyma: Shalamov's Documentary Prose and the Superfluous Snake Charmer……………………..…………………………………………………....................168

The Frostbitten Prisoners of *Kolyma Tales* and their Sense of Superfluity………………….172

Towards a Conclusion: Tracking the Development of Superfluity and Self-Colonisation 177

The Superfluous and the Colonised………………………….……………………………...178

Bibliography……………………………………...…………………………………….……186

Introduction:
Self-Othering and Superfluity in Russian Literature

> I sense in myself that insatiable avidity that devours everything in its path, and I regard sufferings and joys of others merely in relation to myself, as food to sustain my spiritual strength. Passion is no longer capable of robbing me of my sanity; my ambition has been crushed by circumstances, but it has manifested itself in a new form, for ambition is nothing but lust for power, and my greatest pleasure I derive from subordinating everything around me to my will.[1]

This passage, which appears in Pechorin's diary from Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* (1840), can be read as an allegory to the Russian Empire. By expanding its borders, the Empire *devoured everything in its path*, absorbed peoples of various nations with different religious beliefs and forced them to submit to the will of the Tsar.[2] However, between these lines, the literary concept of the superfluous man can also be found. Pechorin, the fictional author of these lines, is probably the most famous of these superfluous characters, and the paragraph quoted above, while allegorising the Empire, showcase Pechorin's desire to make himself superior to, and thereby alienate himself from, the people around him. Alienation is a typical trait of the superfluous man.[3] In scholarly analyses of Pechorin's character, he often emerges as one who is deeply concerned with himself through his heightened sense of self-reflexivity, along with the not mutually exclusive feelings of self-superiority and self-loath.[4] Like Pechorin, the Russian Empire was deeply concerned with itself, especially in relation to other empires in the West, but also in relation to the peoples which the Empire suppressed in territories to the East and South of the imperial capital. Toward the West, it felt inferior and was

---

[1] Mikhail Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time and Princess Ligovskaya* (Richmond: Alma Classics, 2016, translated by Martin Parker, revised by Neil Cornwell), p. 96; Mikhail Lermontov, *Geroi nashego vremeni* (Moscow: *Khuduzhestvenneia literatura*, 1975), p. 107.

[2] For sources on Russian imperial conquests, see for instance: Alexander Morrison, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia: A Study in Imperial Expansion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Willard Sunderland, "Frontier Colonization" in Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004); Jane Burbank & Frederick Cooper, "Beyond the Steppe: Empire-Building in Russia and China" in Burbank & Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 185-218; Michael Khodarkovsky, "'Ignoble Savages and Unfaithful Subjects': Constructing Non-Christian Identities in Early Modern Russia," in Daniel R. Brower, and Edward J. Lazzerini (eds.), *Russia's Orient – Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1997), pp. 9–26.

[3] For traditional interpretations of Pechorin see for instance: Frank Friedeberg Seeley, "The Heyday of the Superfluous Man," *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 31 (Jan. 1952), pp. 92-112; Ellen B. Chances, *Conformity's Children: An Approach to the Superfluous Man in Russian Literature* (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, 1978), pp. 17-22

[4] See for instance, Vladimir Porus, "Chelovek lishnii," *Gumanitarnye issledovaniia v Vostochnoi Sibiri i na Dal'nem Vostoke*, vol. 29, no. 3 (2014), p. 117, or Porus, "A Superfluous Man," translated by Peter Golub, *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 54, no. 2, (2016), p. 116

constantly striving to reach Western levels of enlightenment, while it created a discourse which inferiorized the peoples it colonised and thereby elevated the Russian civilisation to something superior.[5] The ambiguity found in Pechorin's character is thus also to be found in the Empire which the character allegorises. From this short passage of Pechorin's diary, the connection between the literary concept of the superfluous man and the Russian Empire is clear. Nonetheless, the relationship between empire and superfluity remains largely unexplored by scholars of Russian literature. This dissertation intends to fill in this analytical gap by examining the connections between the self-reflexivity of the superfluous man and that of the Russian Empire.

One of the striking features of the Russian Empire was, as Alexander Etkind assesses, the tendency among Russian historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to construe "the process of colonization (…) as self-reflexive and internal, rather than as object-directed and external." Etkind further shows that there existed "an uncritical approval of the processes of colonization" among the same historians.[6] Likewise, Michael Khodarkovsky finds that representatives of the Russian Empire went to great lengths to deny the existence of Russian external colonies, "and considered the newly conquered territories as integral parts of the Russian Empire."[7] This element of Russian history, coupled with the millions of enserfed peasants, has led some, like Etkind, to argue that the main victims of Russian imperialism were the Russians themselves.[8] Furthermore, this has led some to examine the concept of self-colonisation, which in studies of Russian imperialism, to this day, remains a contentious issue.[9]

---

[5] I derive the term inferiorization from Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008)

[6] Alexander Etkind, "How Russia Colonized Itself: Internal Colonization in Classical Russian Historiography," *International Journal for History, Culture, and Modernity*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2015), p. 168

[7] Michael Khodarkovsky, "Between Europe and Asia: Russian State Colonialism in Comparative Perspective, 1550s-1900s," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol. 52 (2018), p. 17

[8] On self-colonisation in Russia, see for instance, Etkind *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Malden: Polity Press, 2011). See also Dragan Kujundzic, "'After': Russian Postcolonial Identity," *MLN*, vol. 115, no. 5 (Dec. 2000), pp. 892-908 and Viatcheslav Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[9] See for instance the following reviews of Etkind's work *Internal Colonisation…*: Anna Fournier, "Reflective Colonization: Domination, Consent, and the Self in Imperial Russia (review article)," *Russian History*, vol. 39 (2012), pp. 519-535; Dina Gusejnova, "Alexander Etkind. Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience (Review)," *Laboratorium*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2012), pp. 127–130; Austin Jersild, "Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience by Alexander Etkind (Review)," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 118, no. 5 (Dec. 2013), pp. 1636–1637; Adeeb Khalid, "Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience by Alexander Etkind (Review)," *Slavic Review*, vol. 71, no. 4 (Winter 2012), pp. 905–907; Lounsbery, "Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience by Alexander Etkind (Review)," *The Russian Review*, vol. 72, no. 1 (Jan. 2013), pp. 157–160; Morrison, "Internal Colonization. Russia's Imperial Experience by Alexander Etkind (Review)," *Ab Imperio*, vol. 3 (2013), pp. 445-457. See also: Tamar Koplatadze, "Theorising Russian Postcolonial Studies," *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2019), pp. 469-489.

Briefly, in the terminology of this thesis, self-colonisation connotes the subjugation and exploitation of the 'self' in the self/other-dichotomy normally found in postcolonial theory. That is, self-colonisation theory, as it is used in this dissertation, studies the subjugation of peoples who share ethnicity, religious beliefs and language with their coloniser. This deviates from the approach of Etkind and others, who equate the colonisation of the self with the colonisation of the other. No such comparisons will be made in this dissertation. The examination of this phenomenon and its influence on Russian literary production, as it develops over the course of this dissertation, finds that tropes such as self-othering and self-Orientalism are not only recurring in Russian imperial and Soviet era literature, but that they tend to serve different functions: sometimes they comment on the hardships of the nation's peasants, sometimes they criticise existing narratives by mimicking imperial decrees, and sometimes they highlight the perception of Russians as 'other' by comparing them with perceived 'uncivilised' peoples near the borders of the Russian Empire. In all cases, self-othering tropes are used as means to critically reflect upon the imperial structures that existed in the society in which they were written. The analyses of the literary works – Alexandr Radishchev's *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* (1790), Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* (1840), Nikolai Leskov's *The Enchanted Wanderer* (1873), Andrei Belyi's *Petersburg* (1913-16), Mikhail Bulgakov's *A Dog's Heart* (1925), Andrei Platonov's *The Foundation Pit* (1930), and Varlam Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales* (1954-73) – all, in different ways, show how self-colonisation (and by extension self-othering and self-Orientalism) were defining for Russian literary production.

In the following, I will outline the background of the appearance of the narrative of self-colonisation, the main factor being, the discourse which the Empire itself created about its own ambiguous nature. I will present the main theoretical concepts which appear over the course of the dissertation, such as, self-colonisation, internal colonisation, and the literary trope of the superfluous man. However, to reach the stage of clarifying the nature of the Russian Empire and the representation of it in literature, certain key concepts need to be outlined to establish the theoretical background of the analyses of the literary works in question.

Russia as an Empire: The Intersections of Russia's Modes of Colonisation

Russia is usually understood as an empire that is different in nature from the European empires such as the British or the French.[10] While there certainly are differences, most notably that Russia almost

[10] Edward Said famously made this distinction in his work, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 9. See also David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique," *PMLA*, Vol. 116, No. 1 (2001), p. 119

exclusively acquired its colonies through contiguous expansion, there are certainly also similarities. An empire is generally understood as a state structure ruled by a single monarch or ruler, which, in a quest for wealth and/or prestige, conquers land and colonises territories and peoples of different nationalities.[11] This is true for the European empires, but also for the Russian Empire. Some empires were, as Robert J. C. Young labels them, "global maritime empires," such as most European empires, while others were "land empires." While the core of a maritime empire was separated from its colonies by an ocean, this separation did not occur in land empires like China, the United States, or Russia. Furthermore, while maritime empires have been decimated to significantly smaller sizes, land empires like the ones mentioned above, have, to some degree, retained their sizes, Young points out.[12]

The main method with which the Russian Empire obtained its colonies, was through contiguous expansion, or as it henceforth will be called, external colonisation.[13] After the disintegration of the Mongol Golden Horde in 1480, a new state emerged centred in Moscow, which began expanding eastward with relative ease, and southward and westward with greater difficulty. This was the beginning of Russia's external colonisation. Russian expansion was especially accelerated after the victory in 1552 over the Kazan khanate, which opened the massive Siberian steppe for colonisation and represented the first major imperial conquest and the first major absorption of non-Russian peoples into the Muscovian Empire.[14] Following conquests, the Empire began its policies of integrating peoples, which normally involved violence, forced conversion,[15] and, in the 1800s, Russification.[16] Usually, authorities referred to the colonised nations in the Empire as *inorodets* (of a different nationality), *inoverets* (of a different faith) or *nemets* (from *nemoi*, meaning mute).[17] The racism that these terms are embedded with, is revealed by their prefixes: *Ino-*, coming from the word *inoi*, means 'other' or different, while *ne-* is a negation. As I have written elsewhere, in the eyes of the Russian colonisers, the colonised peoples "were of different origins (than Russian), they were of a different faith (than Orthodoxy), and they could not speak (the Russian language)."[18]

---

[11] For this definition of empire, I take inspiration from Robert J. C. Young, "Empire," in *Empire, Colony, Postcolony* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), pp. 7-26 and Burbank & Cooper, "Imperial Trajectories" in *Empires in World History…* pp. 1-22

[12] Young, "Empire," in *Empire, Colony, Postcolony*, p. 17

[13] My use of the term external colonisation rather than contiguous expansion is meant to create and highlight the interplay of this phenomenon with internal colonisation.

[14] See for instance, Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (London: Fontana Press, 1998), pp. 3-4; Burbank & Cooper, *Empires in World History…*, pp. 191-192

[15] Khodarkovsky, "'Ignoble Savages…" pp. 13-19

[16] For an in-depth examination of the Russification policies of the 1800s and the consequences they had on various nations in the Russian Empire, see Hosking, *Russia…* pp. 367-397

[17] Khodarkovsky, "'Ignoble Savages…" p. 15. Today, the word *nemets* refers specifically to Germans.

[18] Jeppe Heino Hansen, "Creating the Peasant as Other: Self-colonisation in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 51, no. 5 (2023), p. 935

That is to say, the colonial subjects of the Russian Empire were defined according to criteria of Russianness. The use of these terms, furthermore, reveals the ethnocentrism embedded in Russian colonial practises, which puts the Russian Empire in the same category as Western European empires whose ethnocentrism was essential in their colonial discourse.

Where external colonisation refers to the physical conquest of land, which is contiguous with the Empire's core, internal colonisation, in my use of the term, refers to the policies introduced in newly colonised lands, or lands with a large non-Russian and non-Christian population, intended to Russify, Christianise or otherwise subjugate colonised groups of people. This normally included the use of derogatory discourse, similar to Homi K. Bhabha's characterisation of colonial discourse, which established the otherness of indigenous peoples.[19] This definition of internal colonisation follows the traditional use of the term, where it refers to the subjugation of minority populations within an empire dominated by a different people.[20] It differs, however, from some studies of internal colonisation in Russia, which argue that the Russian Empire mainly conducted colonialism internally, and that the colonisation of the self was similar to the colonisation of indigenous peoples in the imperial periphery.[21]

Proponents of this version of internal colonisation theory tend to argue that Russian expansion was part of a colonisation of the self, that is, Russia was constituted by colonisation, the implication of which is that expansion turns into a colonisation of the self.[22] But as Maxim Khomyakov argues, "this approach obviously cannot take into account different types of domination, oppression or modernization and development, because it sees all of them through the lens of the internal colonization theory."[23] Thus, while the term internal colonisation is used with some frequency over the course of this dissertation, it is used in a different manner to ensure that the colonisation of the

---

[19] See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), pp. 94-120

[20] See for instance, Robert Blauner, "Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt," *Social Problems*, vol. 16, no. 4 (spring 1969), pp. 393-408; Stephen Wyn Williams, "Internal Colonialism, Core-Periphery Contrasts and Devolution: An Integrative Comment," *Area*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1977), pp. 272-278; Michael Hechter, Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999); Ramón A. Gutiérrez, "Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race," *Du Bois Review*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2004), pp. 281–295; Charles Pinderhughes, "How 'Black Awakening in Capitalist America' Laid the Foundation for a New Internal Colonialism Theory," *The Black Scholar*, vol. 40, no. 2 (2010), pp. 71–78; John R. Chávez, "Aliens in Their Native Lands: The Persistence of Internal Colonial Theory," *Journal of World History*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2011), pp. 785–809; Steven Sabol, *The Touch of Civilization: Comparing American and Russian Internal Colonization* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2017).

[21] I am here specifically referring to Etkind's contentious work *Internal Colonization*… See also Kujundzic's article "'After'… pp. 892-908 and Morozov's, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity*… which both argue that Russian postcolonial identity is marked by self-colonisation. For criticism of Etkind, Kujundzic and Morozov's approaches see for instance Tamar Koplatadze, "Theorising Russian Postcolonial Studies," *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2019), pp. 473-477.

[22] See Etkind, *Internal Colonization*… pp. 67-68

[23] Maxim Khomyakov, "Russia: Colonial, Anticolonial: Postcolonial Empire?" *Social Science Information*, vol. 59, no. 2 (2020), p. 244

self does not obscure the colonisation of indigenous peoples in areas that were conquered by the Russian Empire, such as the Caucasus, Siberia or Central Asia. The way in which the Muscovian, Russian and Soviet Empires conducted colonialism is thus separated into three different categories: External colonisation, that is, the physical conquest of land and peoples; internal colonisation, which refers to the consolidation of rule in newly conquered lands and subjecting indigenous peoples to Christianisation, Russification, violence and racism; and lastly, self-colonisation.

As stated earlier, self-colonisation refers to the colonisation of the self in the self/other-dichotomy, meaning that the coloniser and colonised share ethnicity, religion and language. The narrative that Russia colonised itself, or the theory of self-colonisation, is often in academia, as we shall see, substantiated by a number of different factors: (1) the ambiguous cultural identity of the Russians, (2) the Russian Empire's external colonisation and subsequent integration of colonies into the Empire, blurring the distinction between the core and the colonies, and (3) by the Russian Empire and Soviet Union's repeated attempts to alter Russian identity through reforms and subjugating certain strata of the population (mainly peasants) to inferior statuses.

Russia's geographic location on the edge of Europe has throughout the centuries led Europeans to depict Russia and the Russians as 'Asiatic' and by extension 'barbaric.'[24] Simultaneously, Russian policies since Peter I (ruled 1682-1725[25]) have shifted between Western-minded reforms and policies of a more Pan-Slavic nature,[26] which contributed to the ambiguity of Russian identity. Such policies can be seen as measures to colonise the Russian self, that is, dramatically alter the identity of the Russian people through discourse. Dragan Kujundzic, for instance, argues that Peter's Europeanisation reforms and the foundation of St. Petersburg represented efforts of self-colonisation, which eventually formed a Russian postcolonial identity.[27] However, Andreas Schönle, Andrei Zorin and Alexei Evstratov have pointed out, the Europeanisation efforts in Russia were less far-reaching than those in Japan (the Meiji restoration) or Turkey (the Kemalist revolution), given that Peter's modernisation reforms specifically targeted the noble classes and the

---

[24] See for instance: David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, "Russia's Asian Temptation," *International Journal*, vol. 55, no. 4 (Autumn, 2000), pp. 606-608; Tracy Dennison, "Why is Russia Different," in Dennison, *The Institutional Framework of Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 1-28; Maria Di Salvo, "A Venice of the North? Italian Views of St Petersburg," in Anthony Cross (ed.), *St Petersburg, 1703-1825* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), pp. 71-79.

[25] Peter was a co-monarch from his tenth birthday with Ivan V, until Ivan's death in 1696.

[26] On Russia's cultural relation with the West, see for instance: Serhii Plokhy, "The Invention of Russia" in Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 250-298; Kevork Oskanian, "A Very Ambiguous Empire: Russia's Hybrid Exceptionalism," *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 70, no. 1 (Jan. 2018), pp. 26-52

[27] Dragan Kujundzic, "'After'…" pp. 893-894. See also Boris Groys, "Imena goroda," in *Utopiia i obmen* (Moscow: Znak, 1993), pp. 357-365.

military only. They further argue that "Westernization started at a significantly earlier stage of social development, [and] the state considered the top-down Europeanization of a narrow upper class as more effective and often safer, than fundamental social and political transformation."[28] In other words, the peasantry in Russia where seen as unfit for Europeanisation.[29] Thus, Europeanisation and modernisation of the Russian upper classes, although it arguably is self-colonisation, represents a minor way in which Russia colonised itself in the framework of this dissertation.

Next, in the creation of the narrative that the Russian Empire colonised itself, many scholars point to the absence of clear distinctions between Russia's colonies and its core. Etkind, for instance argues, that "[s]ince the colonized areas did not retain their special status but were absorbed by the Russian state, there is no reason to distinguish between Russia's colonies and its metropolitan centre."[30] That Russia's colonies did not keep their diminutive statuses as colonies or protectorates, furthermore, leads Alexander Morrison to argue that:

> Class or *soslovie* (estate), not race, was what determined hierarchies in Russia. Above all, where was that vital distinction between metropole and colony, that barrier between the political, cultural and territorial 'nation' at the heart of empire, and the colonies at the periphery, so characteristic of 'Western' colonialism?[31]

While it is true that the Russian Empire often let people of non-Russian origin take on high positions in the state apparatus, it is not a claim that convincingly proves that race did not determine hierarchies. While class definitely did, as in any other society, determine hierarchy, race was also a factor in what Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper have identified as the 'politics of difference,' which were the primary principle of Russian imperial policies. All people in Russia, including peoples absorbed into the Empire through external colonisation, were categorised according to ethnicity, religion, occupation as well as other criteria, and then given rights based on these categorisations.[32] Thus, race played an important part in Russian imperial politics when the rights of people were determined.

---

[28] Andreas Schönle, Andrei Zorin & Alexei Evstratov, "Introduction" in Schönle, Zorin & Evstratov (eds.), *The Europeanized Elite in Russia, 1762-1825* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016), p. 3. See also Koplatadze, "Theorising Russian…" pp. 474-475

[29] See for instance: Evgenii Akelev, "The Barber of all Russia: Lawmaking, Resistance, and Mutual Adaptation During Peter the Great's Cultural Reforms," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 17, no. 2 (Spring 2016), pp. 241-275

[30] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 68

[31] Alexander Morrison, "The Russian Empire and Soviet Union: Too Soon to Talk of Echoes?" in Kalypso Nicolaïdis, Berny Sèbe & Gabrielle Maas (eds.), *Echoes of Empire: Memory, Identity and colonial legacies* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), p. 159

[32] Burbank & Cooper, *Empires in World History…* p. 273

The politics of difference gave rights to groups of people rather than individuals. In newly conquered territories, by and large, the already existing social relations were kept in place, as long as the colonised peoples agreed to obey the Tsar. If there was any insurrection from a specific group, their rights were taken away.[33] That indigenous peoples often were given rights that some strata of the ethnic Russian population were not, such as exemption from military service and enserfment,[34] have led some to argue that those who suffered most under the Russian Empire were the Russian peasantry and serfs.[35] However, as Tamar Koplatadze argues, this creates a "contest of victimhood"[36] and "overlook[s] the colonial subject-status of the nations in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union, [and] risks promoting the image of Russia as a benign coloniser, harsh on itself but benevolent towards, and even beneficial for, its external colonies."[37] Hence, this dissertation will avoid going into comparisons of suffering amongst different peoples, which is achieved by creating distinctions between the three different modes of colonisation identified above.

The issue of identifying core and periphery, however, is not solved merely by characterising the modes of colonisation which occurred in the Russian Empire; one has to determine where these modes primarily take place. This reveals that the borders between core and periphery are ever-changing, which is mainly due to the fact that the Russian Empire was ever-expanding and thus consistently incorporated more and more periphery into the Empire.[38] Internal colonisation will, given its nature, mainly occur in areas with large populations of non-Russian and non-Christian peoples. Self-colonisation in turn, will occur in areas where the majority of the population is ethnically Russian, that is, mainly located near the Russian metropoles. As we shall see, however, there are instances where self-colonisation moves into the periphery, mainly through displacement of Russian people.

While Morrison, as we saw above, pointed out the difficulty in distinguishing between core and periphery, Morrison does contend that:

> Russia may not have had a clear distinction between metropole and colony as a 'classic' European maritime empire, but there was an idea of what constituted the 'core' or 'European' areas of the empire, and this was

[33] Burbank & Cooper, *Empires in World History…* p. 271
[34] Khodarkovsky, "'Ignoble Savages…'" p. 18-19
[35] See for instance: Etkind, "Orientalism Reversed: Russian Literature in the Times of Empires," *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2007), p. 618
[36] Koplatdze, "Theorising Russian…" p. 475
[37] Koplatadze, "Theorising Russian…" p. 475
[38] See for instance: Nailya Tagirova, "Mapping the Empire's Economic Regions from the Nineteenth to the Early Twentieth Century" in Jane Burbank, Mark von Hagen & Anatolyi Remnev (eds.), *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700-1917* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), pp. 125-138

> reflected administratively in the distinction between areas under civilian and under military rule, those in which the liberal reforms of the 1860s were applied and those where they were withheld.[39]

While it at first glance seems relatively easy to identify where self-colonisation takes place, it is not limited to the core of the Empire. Serfdom, which represents the most important way in which Russia colonised itself, was mainly located in the areas near St. Petersburg and Moscow.[40] However, there were also efforts to expand serfdom into the vast Siberian steppe,[41] which represents peripheral lands, just as convicts were removed from Central Russia and put in prison and labour camps in Siberia in the imperial era, and in higher numbers in the Soviet Era. These examples represent how policies of self-colonisation were not limited to the areas near Russia's metropoles.

At times it can also be difficult to identify positively whether a policy or an action committed by the Empire is one mode of colonisation or another. For instance, the invitation made by Catherine II to primarily German settlers to establish peasant communes in areas in the Volga Region can be seen as both internal colonisation and self-colonisation. It was internal colonisation because it was a ploy in the development of the region and consolidation of Russian power there,[42] but it was also an invitation of foreigners to colonise areas regarded as Russian, not unlike the invitation of the Varangian ruler, Rurik in the ninth century.[43] A similar example is found in the region of Kabarda, which in 1778-79 found itself in the midst of a conflict between Russian colonisers and Kabardians resisting Russian rule. The region was claimed by the Empire, and it is therefore possible to argue that the conflict and the suppression of the Kabardians represented internal colonisation. However, it is also possible to argue that the conflict in Kabarda was an outright conquest of land and therefore external colonisation.[44]

The intersections of Russia's modes of colonisation are plenty and make it difficult to unblur the blurriness of the Russian Empire. While countless scholars comment on how hazy Russian imperial culture is and how difficult the Empire itself is to define, this dissertation, instead of erasing

---

[39] Morrison, "The Russian Empire…" pp. 160-161
[40] See for instance: Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, second edition, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), pp. 144-145; David Moon, *The Russian Peasantry 1600-1930: The World the Peasants Made* (London and New York: Longman, 1999) pp. 11-36.
[41] Willard Sunderland, "Peasants on the Move: State Peasant Resettlement in Imperial Russia, 1805-1830s," *The Russian Review*, vol. 52, no. 4 (Oct. 1993), pp. 472-485
[42] See for instance, Olga V. Erokhina & Olga A. Litzenberger, "German Colonists in the Migration Policy of the Russian Autocracy (Analysis of the Laws of the Russian Empire)," *RUDN Journal of Russian History*, vol. 19, no. 4 (Nov. 2020), pp. 810–823
[43] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* pp. 128-132
[44] On the intricacies of the conflict in Kabarda in 1778-79 see, Z. Zh. Glasheva, "Dokumenty istorii semimesiachnoi voiny v Kabarde 1778-79 gg.," *Izvestiia Kabardino-Balkarskogo nauchnogo tsentra*, vol. 99, no. 1 (2021), pp. 70-81

the borders between the core and periphery, aims to reestablish them. By doing so, the dissertation ensures not only that the suffering of indigenous peoples in Russia's periphery is not conflated with the suffering of the Russian peasants, but also that the connection between Russia's three modes of colonisation and Russian literary production can be brought to the forefront of the literary analyses. Furthermore, this approach will reveal how Russian authors repeatedly compare themselves to colonised peoples through narratives of self-othering and self-Orientalism, as we shall see.

Concerning Methodology: Self-Colonisation in Russian Literature

This dissertation examines Russian literature in a new light in which the space claimed by the Russian Empire, emerges as an unusual colonial space. Focusing on how the Russian Empire shaped the thoughts and writing of Russian authors, and how that affected the characters they created – Russian and non-Russian – this dissertation finds an astonishing tendency to orientalise Russian characters, customs, and culture, as well as Russian space near the imperial core. The tendency to orientalise Russian characters has been addressed in scholarship.[45] However, such studies tend to focus on representations of the Russian periphery, rather than its centre, although Valeria Sobol identified what is referred to as 'internal orientalism' in Radishchev's *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*.[46] Furthermore, while Alexandr Pushkin's and Lermontov's characters in exile in the Caucasus have repeatedly been identified as 'other' or 'going native,' they have never been seen in the light of the self-colonisation that they will have been subject to before they left Central Russia.

Many academic publications on the topic of the representation of imperial borderlands in Russian literature and poetry have seen the light of day since the 1990s. Susan Layton's study of *Russian Literature and Empire* (1994) focuses on the Caucasus in the imagination of Russian poets and authors in the imperial era. It does so with a methodology based in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and tracks tropes close to traditional Orientalism, such as imaginative geography and representations of indigenous peoples. However, Layton also examines how Russian authors represented their own people by "dissolving boundaries between Russia and Asia,"[47] and colonisers "going native" in the Caucasus. Similarly, Harsha Ram argues that the Caucasian poems of Pushkin and Lermontov and their representation of the indigenous peoples in the Caucasus were "metaphors for [the artists'] own struggles and eventual disempowerment," and "[t]he romantic artist thus became

[45] See for instance Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 213-219

[46] Valeria Sobol, "Internal Orientalism in Radishchev's 'Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow,'" *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie*, vol. 68, no. 2 (2011), pp. 241-269

[47] Layton, *Russian Literature*… p. 10

an ambiguous third element in the otherwise binary conflict between the colonizer and the colonized."[48] Ram focuses on what he calls the 'imperial sublime,' and argues that,

> Russian poetry will repeatedly encounter imperial history at the intersection of (…) two axes. The vertical terror of lyric afflatus is resolved in a compensatory and transformative identification with the horizontal stretch of Russian might. An experience of poetic inspiration is thus presented as analogous to the political power it then describes: impersonal, absolute, a vision that soars to embrace the expanding realm. This spatial articulation of two axes, along with the psychic and historical energies it brings together, provides the basic scaffolding of the imperial sublime.[49]

In short, Russian imperialism coupled with the romantic ideals of poetic writing at the time created the 'imperial sublime.' That is, Russian romantic poets were profoundly affected by the ideals of imperialism, but shared an ambiguous relation to these ideals when in the Caucasus, seeing first-hand the perils of the indigenous populations there. While romantic poets generally supported the Russian move into the Caucasus, they saw in the population there, hardships that were similar to their own experience of 'their' Empire.

Paradoxically, this focus on the periphery leads to the exoticisation of Russian territory and people. Like Layton and Ram focusing on the Caucasus, Myroslav Shkandrij focuses on the interplay between Russian and Ukrainian literature and argues that "[t]he construction of a literary Ukraine in Russian writings has analogies in the construction of other literary borderlands: the Caucasus, Poland, and Siberia."[50] Shkandrij, thus, sees the representation of Ukraine in similar vein as other peripheral areas in the Russian Empire. Since these peripheries were almost always compared with the Russian centre, the Empire in its entirety comes to appear peripheral, as Katya Hokanson argues,

> Allied with this sense of Russia as an Asian or Oriental country beyond the discursive reach of Europe [and] the notion that its spaces were vast, empty, and undifferentiated, embodying a frightening lacuna of meaning, culture, and history. It was as if Russia were made up almost entirely of periphery.[51]

In the same vein, Anne Lounsbery examines the theme of provinciality in Russian literature with a postcolonial methodological framework. Lounsbery argues that places such as the Siberian steppe or

---

[48] Harsha Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 11

[49] Ram, *The Imperial Sublime*, p. 5

[50] Myroslav Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial Times* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2001), p. xi

[51] Katya Hokanson, *Writing at Russia's Borders* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2008), p. 4

Ukraine originally were treated as colonial spaces, but through literary production "ended up being re-imagined as repositories of pure Russianness."[52] Furthermore, Lounsbery argues that this provinciality, assigned to what were essentially colonies, can be ascribed to the centres of Moscow and St. Petersburg as well, as they were both centres, but in comparison with the other, appeared peripheral.[53] Combined with Shkandrij's notion of "acquired exoticism,"[54] and Layton's notion of "going native" at play in Lermontov's protagonist, Pechorin, it appears that it is both the Russian territory and the Russian people that emerge as 'exotic,' blurring the lines between coloniser and colonised.

However, in the Russian representations of indigenous populations, readers are led to believe that they are far inferior to the Russians, who simultaneously seem not so different from them. As Shkandrij argues,

> [R]acial degeneracy and obduracy justify imperial conquest and rule, but – the reader is led to understand – the mental outlook of natives is so different from the Russian outlook that integration will be a long process requiring great caution.[55]

It is this ambiguity – between the acquired exoticism *of* the Russians and discursive inferiorization of the indigenous peoples *by* the Russians upon which much scholarship focuses. Combined with the perceived peripheral characteristics of the whole of the Russian Empire, it creates an unclear distinction between coloniser and colonised in Russian literature. As Etkind argues "[Russian poets] constructed their cultural identities by contrasting themselves against the West and by suffusing these identities with domestic Orientalia."[56] This tendency among Russian authors and poets contributes to the blurring of identities on either side of the colonisation spectrum and has indirectly led to the conflation of the Russian Empire's modes of colonisation.

As mentioned, this dissertation strives to make the distinction between the coloniser and the colonised clearer, while acknowledging how literary narratives make it appear ambiguous. It does so by being clear about the roles of the characters, their ethnicities, and analysing their conduct in reference to the Russian Empire. For instance, Chapter II, which analyses Lermontov's *A Hero of*

---

[52] Anne Lounsbery, *Life is Elsewhere: Symbolic Geography in the Russian Provinces, 1800-1917* (Ithaca and London: Northern Illinois University Press, 2019) p. 12
[53] Lounsbery, *Life is Elsewhere*… p. 23
[54] Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine*... p. 47
[55] Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine*... p. 40
[56] Etkind, "Orientalism Reversed…" p. 625

Our Time, sees Pechorin as a coloniser, and even though Pechorin has 'exotic' traits, his conduct and appearance are treated as cultural appropriation used to his own benefit. Furthermore, this dissertation uses self-colonisation theory in a different manner than others have done in the past. As a tool of literary analysis, self-colonisation methodology exposes discourses of self-othering, which are akin to the concept of self-Orientalism, in which people deemed Oriental by Western discourse perpetuate their own Orientalism.[57] In Russian literature, however, self-Orientalism emerges, it seems, as a result of the Russians' own expectations of themselves.

By exposing discourses of self-othering and self-Orientalism, the dissertation keeps in place the distinctions between the coloniser and colonised that existed between the Russians and the colonised peoples, regardless of how 'exotic' the Russians made themselves appear. Furthermore, this methodology highlights the Russian desire to victimise themselves and reveals that the true victims of self-colonisation are not the Russian nobles or the aristocracy, but rather the Russian peasants as seen in millions of people suffering under enserfment, forced displacement, and dekulakisation. That being said, the impression that many Russian authors gave their readers, was that their existed a clear sense of powerlessness and superfluity in the Russian nobility.

An important theme in this dissertation is therefore superfluity which is traditionally ascribed to Russian nobles of rank. Ellen Chances sums up the traditional descriptions of the superfluous man as such:

> …the superfluous man is depicted as an ineffectual aristocrat at odds with society. He is described as "dreamy, useless," as an "intellectual incapable of action," an "ineffective idealist," "a hero who is sensitive to social and ethical problems, but who fails to act, partly because of personal weakness, partly because of political and social restraints on his freedom of action." His salient feature is his "alienation from [his] environment, eventually leading to a complete break from and falling out of it."[58]

---

[57] See for instance, Arif Dirlik, "Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism," *History and Theory*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Dec. 1996), pp. 96-118; Grace Yan & Carla Almeida Santos, "'China Forever': Tourism Discourse and Self-Orientalism," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 36, no. 2 (2009), pp. 295-315; William G. Feighery, "Tourism and Self-Orientalism in Oman: a Critical Discourse Analysis," vol. 9, no. 3 (2012), pp. 269-284; Mirt Komel, "Re-orientalizing the Assassins in Western Historical-Fiction Literature: Orientalism and Self-Orientalism in Bartol's Alamut, Tarr's Alamut, Boschert's Assassins of Alamut and Oden's Lion of Cairo," *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 17, no. 5 (2014), pp. 525-548; Helena Liu, "Beneath the White Gaze: Strategic Self-Orientalism Among Chinese Australians," *Human Relations*, vol. 70, no. 7 (2017), pp. 781-804; Jinhyun Cho, "Constructing a White Mask Through English: the Misrecognized Self in Orientalism," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, no. 271 (2021), pp. 17-34

[58] Chances, *Conformity's Children…* pp. 17-18. In this passage Chances quotes from Nina A. Toumanova, *Anton Chekhov, The Voice of Twilight Russia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), p. 195; Thomas Winner, *Chekhov and his Prose* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 101; D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature*, ed. and abr. Francis J. Whitfield (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1973), p. 189; William Harkins, *Dictionary of Russian Literature* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1957), p. 373; and A. Lavretsky, "*Lishniye lyudi*" *Literaturnaya entsiklopediya*, Vol. 6 (1932), p. 514.

Chances' approach revolves around the binary distinction between conformity and nonconformity. The superfluous man, Chances argues, is normally juxtaposed with a "conformist character who carries the banner of victory,"[59] while Jehanne M. Gheith argues that the superfluous men "share a radical alienation from society and an inability to take personally meaningful or socially useful action."[60] Gheith furthermore focuses on the relationship between the superfluous man and a female character, who is labelled 'the necessary woman,' and whose love-affair with the superfluous man always ends in failure.[61] Where Chances saw the failure of the superfluous man reflected in the success of the conformist character, Ghieth sees it reflected in the failure of the superfluous man to marry 'the necessary woman.'

Frank Friedeberg Seeley, in his seminal text, argued that Pechorin (the epitome of superfluity) was a dandy who thought himself superior to others, and a rebel who albeit had little idea of what he was rebelling against.[62] Whereas Seeley sees Pechorin as a failed rebel, and Gheith and Chances see his failure reflected in the characters surrounding him, David Patterson focuses on his monological address, which fails to attract an answer, as he writes:

> …it is not just a social or a political condition that situates the superfluous man in a position of exile from life; more than that, underlying that, it is a monological word that fails because it is incapable of evoking a reply that would give it meaning. As a character in the novel, the superfluous man must be understood not only in terms of his relation to society but also in terms of his manner of speaking within the novel.[63]

Given the superfluous man's isolation, he is often speaking to himself in what Patterson calls a "monological discourse."[64] In his view the ineffectiveness of the superfluous man's actions, is reflected in the monological discourse, since this discourse does not change over the course of superfluous man narratives: "The superfluous man," Patterson argues, "is invariably the same man – or the same non-man – at the end of the novel that he was at its outset, for his discourse is the same, monological discourse."[65]

---

[59] Chances, *Conformity's Children…* p. 20
[60] Jehanne M. Gheith, "The Superfluous Man and the Necessary Woman: A 'Re-Vision,'" *The Russian Review* 55, No. 2 (Apr. 1996), p. 230
[61] Gheith, "The Superfluous Man…" p. 230
[62] Seeley, "The Heyday…" pp. 98, 105
[63] David Patterson, "The Loss of the Word in the Superfluous Man" in Patterson, *Exile: The Sense of Alienation in Modern Russian Letters* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994), pp. 4-5
[64] David Patterson, "The Loss of the Word…" pp. 5-7
[65] David Patterson, "The Loss of the Word…" p. 6

However, over the course of this dissertation, it will be argued that the concept of superfluity, the feeling of powerlessness and the inability to change society, was intricately linked to imperialism and as such was something which inflicted Russians in both higher and lower strata, including peasants. In Chapter I, the origin of the superfluous man is suggested to be found in Radishchev's traveller-narrator, as this character realises the injustice of the institution of serfdom, before realising that nothing can be done to rectify the injustice. This begins the deeper connection that this dissertation tracks between imperial structures and the theme of superfluity in Russian literature. In Chapter II, I examine Pechorin as part of the Decembrist generation and argue that he shares some of the same qualities that the Decembrists contained, which first and foremost has to do with his rebelliousness against the established norms of the Russian *beau monde*, which he felt were oppressive. However, the main scope with which I analyse Pechorin's character is through that of postcolonial theory, where I examine him as a coloniser who acquires exoticism to create an inversion of the Bhabhan cultural hybrid, referred to as the 'inverted hybrid.'[66] In Chapter III, the superfluous man – or more broadly the concept of superfluity – is applied to a character who was born in enserfment in the form of Leskov's protagonist, Fliagin, from *The Enchanted Wanderer*. This begins the extension of the reach of the concept of superfluity beyond the nobility, which culminates in the argument that the whole of the peasantry during collectivisation in the 1930s were made superfluous by an othering discourse conducted by the Stalinist authorities (see Chapter VI). In Chapter VII, the last chapter of the dissertation, this theory of superfluity is applied to the Gulag camps as they are represented in Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales* and shows how far-reaching the policies of making superfluous the Soviet unwanted population were. The superfluity of the masses thus becomes the result of the self-colonising nature of the Russian and Soviet Empires.

While Patterson opens for the idea that the concept of superfluity is part of a larger sense of alienation that existed in Russian literature, he does not go as far, as I intend to do over the course of this dissertation. While many studies exist on the superfluous man, an in-depth inquiry of his character and the mechanisms that moulded his character, is still missing as the study of the superfluous man has not evolved much over the past 30 years. While it is generally accepted among scholars that the superfluous man is a result of the society he lives in, his character has never been studied in relation to the Russian Empire, or with the possibility of the superfluous man being a coloniser, or a self-colonised subject. Naturally, Pechorin has been examined in the light of empire, but the superfluous

[66] Bhabha shows in *The Location of Culture* how the hybrid is an inscription of the self in the other. For Pechorin it is the other way around: he is an inscription of the other in the self.

men who roam St. Petersburg, for instance, have not. This study, which first of all examines self-colonisation narratives in Russian literature, sees the superfluous man as a result of the Empire in which he lived, that is, a result of self-colonisation. In the Empire which made a whole population of Russians feel superfluous, the superfluous man as we know him (aristocratic, but powerless) emerges as a tiny part of an enormous machine which subjugated its own population as well as indigenous peoples at the borders of the Empire. The implications of such an approach are that the traditional superfluous man slowly fades from view and instead the superfluous people emerge as the peasant and working masses who were all subjugated by powerful discourses in the Russian and Soviet Empires. As such, this approach is a decolonisation of the concept of superfluity.

Tracking the Superfluous and the Colonised

This dissertation examines the development of the concept of superfluity, as I described above, amongst the ethnic Russian population as they are represented in Russian literature. Given the nature of the Russian Empire and the great sensibility among Russian authors toward colonised peoples in the Russian borderlands, a clear distinction between the superfluous and the colonised emerges. There is, albeit a distinct interconnectedness between these two concepts, as I have also outlined above, which makes it useful to examine them together. With the inclusion of the theory of self-colonisation, there is a great risk to conflate the experience of being colonised by an external empire and being colonised by one's 'own' empire. Therefore, in instances where it is relevant to a particular argument, I will use the term 'self-colonised' to denote victims of Russian self-colonisation. However, as the concept of superfluity develops over the course of the dissertation's argumentation, it comes to denote the term 'self-colonised.' This becomes especially evident in Part II, in which I greatly extend not only the usual chronological boundaries of the superfluous man, but also the traditional understanding and application of the term. Over the course of the thesis, the superfluous people will be revealed as characters who are obscured and othered through methods of self-othering by the authors who created them, and one can therefore argue that superfluous people are self-colonised subjects.

The trope of superfluity is introduced in Chapter I, as Radishchev in *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*, as many authors would do after him, created a noble character through whom the ethical challenges of the Russian Empire were channelled. The superfluous man in Radishchev's work is identified through Chances' work, *Conformity's Children*, in which the character is defined as an ineffective aristocrat, an outcast from society, and with no hope of succeeding in any of his

perils.[67] Radishchev's traveller is an inactive character who stumbles upon stories which advances him on his spiritual journey and opens his eyes to the suffering of the peasantry who reside in the space between Russia's two capitals. This is where the superfluous man and the peasantry meet for the first time in Russian prose literature. Radishchev's work, like Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* and Leskov's *The Enchanted Wanderer*, juxtaposes the superfluous character with the ongoing colonisation efforts conducted by the Empire – externally, internally, and towards its own population. Radishchev and the self-Orientalist way in which he characterised the core of the Empire, is the first indication that the superfluous man is inextricably linked with the Empire, which was characterised by centuries of subjugating peoples to inferior statuses, both at the periphery and the core, and both the other and the self.

In Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* we see the relation between superfluity and external colonisation (see Chapter II). The novel's 'hero,' Pechorin, is literally a coloniser in his capacity as an officer in the Russian army fighting in the Caucasus. During this effort of external colonisation, we never see Pechorin in battle; instead, the focus is on his inner struggles and his incapacity for conformity among the Russian high society. Furthermore, we see him as a typical character in Orientalist literature who asserts his power over the local (female) population, but finds it difficult to do so in Taman, an uncertain space on the border between Europe and Asia, or – in his view – between 'civility' and 'barbarity.'[68] Chapter II is concerned, however, not so much with the traditional understanding of the superfluous man, who is seen as a result of the Westernised cultural developments that had taken place since Peter I. Instead, it sees Pechorin's superfluity in relation to his status as a coloniser and argues that Pechorin, through his acquired exoticism and self-othering, is an inversion of the Bhabhan hybrid[69] as well as a superfluous man. Furthermore, a reading of Vissarion Belinskii's review of Lermontov's work, reveals that Maxim Maximych, the supposed conformist winner who stands in contrast to Pechorin, was celebrated for his supposed 'Russianness,' even though he too was guilty of cultural appropriation of Caucasian culture and customs. It shows the extent to which self-othering was part of Russian culture.

The superfluous man found his home in the enormous body of nineteenth-century realist literature, but as Chapter III shows, although it does not adhere to the principles of 1860s realist fiction, there were also hints at superfluity in Leskov's *The Enchanted Wanderer*. Fliagin, the

[67] Chances, *Conformity's Children*… pp. 17-18
[68] Valeria Sobol, "The Uncanny Frontier of Russian Identity: Travel, Ethnography and Empire in Lermontov's 'Taman'" *The Russian Review*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (2011), pp. 65-79
[69] See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

novella's protagonist and narrator, also deviates significantly from traditional superfluous men, in that he is born as a serf and as a result is uneducated. His uneducated position creates a matter-of-fact narrative, or *skaz*-narration. Fliagin's lowly status also makes it possible for him to change his situation a number of times, which is normally not possible for superfluous men, who usually are trapped in their noble rank. Over the course of the novella, he rises from a serf to a member of the nobility before he joins the clergy. However, Fliagin's lack of education, does not prevent him from obtaining a status as a petty coloniser. While being held captive in the Kazakh desert, he expresses clear racist and Orientalist views, which reveals the deep paradoxical nature of the Russian *narodnichestvo*-movement. Turning the blind eye to the suffering endured by colonised peoples in Russia's periphery, the *narodniki* opposed the abhorrent treatment of the peasantry in Central Russia. This reveals that the narrative of self-colonisation as it has existed for centuries not only obscures the suffering of indigenous peoples, but also victimises the Russian people.

The opening three chapters, thus, examine the trope of superfluity in relation to the nature of the Russian Empire, especially focusing on the way Russia expanded and colonised lands and peoples. This deviates from the norm of superfluous man studies, in which the character is normally seen as a result of spiritual incapacities such as inability to act and conform successfully to the Russian high society. In this dissertation, this characterisation remains true, but it is seen in a different context and asks the question of how the superfluous man was shaped by the colonising nature of the Russian Empire. Additionally, Fliagin emerges as a superfluous man, but not one who is traditionally superfluous. Rather, he is struck by a superfluity first as a serf, and later as an office clerk and subsequently as a monk, subjugated by the Russian Empire and the Orthodox Church. As such, the superfluous man is seen as a result of Russia's self-colonisation. He was never a character who solely lived in the minds of the nation's great authors, but a character who wandered the back alleys of St. Petersburg, the streets of Moscow, but also the muddy fields in the Russian countryside, and the prison camps at the very edges of the Russian Empire, as we shall see. The superfluous man was ridiculed, punished, and exiled, but he was never the subject of racism – simply because he was Russian, and so was his oppressor. Given the interlinkages of self-colonisation with internal- and external colonisation, these modes of colonisation will have had an effect on the superfluous man, when he is seen as a self-colonised subject.

Chapter IV, which forms the last chapter of Part I, shows how superfluity can be applied to the masses. The workers of Vasilevskii Island who throughout Belyi's *Petersburg* are orientalised and ridiculed by the judgmental narrative voice, emerge as superfluous with a high level of potential

for rebellion. This is another instance of the self-othering discourse in Russian literature and is analysed according to the myth of the creation of the Russian capital.[70] The consistent representations of St. Petersburg's workers in reference to the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) in Belyi's work, emerge as a self-othering discourse which uses obvious racist stereotypes about East Asian peoples. As such, Chapter IV, as well as the three preceding chapters that form Part I, follows the idea that self-orientalisation can reveal both the oppression felt by colonised peoples and the motivations of the colonising power, which falls in line with Anna Fournier's characterisation of self-colonisation theory:

> If orientalizing the self can both reveal and obscure actual power relations, one may want to explore it as a complex process that tells us as much about oppression as it does about agency and power.[71]

Over the course of Part I, which focuses heavily on self-Orientalism in Russian literature, it will become evident that self-colonisation was embedded in the minds of Russia's authors, while the trope of self-othering must have been a conscious inclusion in their works.

Seeing the superfluous man through the lens of self-Orientalism naturally changes the characterisation of this type of character. As such, the superfluous man is traditionally viewed as a Westernised and well-read individual, but as this thesis progresses through the first part, the superfluous man will have evolved from a nobleman concerning himself with the grandeur of the world, to a coloniser in the Caucasus, a peasant working his way up the Table of Ranks, into a worker from Vasilevskii Island wearing a Manchurian cap. This is a striking difference from the traditional use of the term, which necessitates a more encompassing definition of it. The superfluous type, while being Russian, is not necessarily one who looks or acts 'Russian', but can be someone who appears to be from the Orientalised East, either through a judgmental narrative discourse (such as in Belyi's *Petersburg*), or through self-Orientalism (such as Pechorin).

Part II continues the theme of self-Orientalism but examines the phenomenon in the context of the new Soviet reality. The Bolsheviks established an anti-imperial narrative, but simultaneously argued that the Soviet Union should keep hold of its colonial possessions.[72] While the concept of race

---

[70] On the Petersburg myth and establishment as colonisation see: Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, translated by Ann Shukman, (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001), pp. 191-202

[71] Fournier, "Reflective Colonization…" p. 537

[72] On the topic of nationality-related policies in the Soviet Union see for instance: Eric D. Weitz, "Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges," *Slavic Review*, vol. 61, no. 1 (spring 2002), pp. 1-29; Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet*

was largely eradicated from Soviet national policies, Part II studies literary works according to the new political reality, the subjugation of the peasantry, and the praxis of exiling members of society who were deemed superfluous. This was done using a self-othering discourse, which was also reflected in literary production. However, this discourse was now used, sometimes mockingly, to expose the arbitrariness with which it was applied (see Chapter VI), especially in dissident literature. Part II examines the discourses of the Soviet Empire as they emerge in unofficial literature. The self-othering trope, which continues from the imperial era, takes a different form in these works. They are now not related to racial stereotypes, but instead ideological ones. As such, 'barbarity' and 'uncivility' along with other markers of perceived 'backwardness' are related to social classes rather than race, mimicking official discourse. As such, the proletarian masses emerge as the new 'white' people, whereas *kulaki* and the bourgeois becomes the new subjects of oppression according to the narrative discourses in the literary works under examination in Part II.

Chapter V, the first chapter of Part II, examines the new ideological reality after the October Revolution in 1917. Through a reading of Bulgakov's *A Dog's Heart*, the self-colonising tendencies of the Bolshevik regime is revealed, while comparing it with the self-colonising practises of the old tsarist regime, which Professor Preobrazhenskii represents. The professor is written into the category of the colonising superfluous men, when he finds it difficult to conform to the new political reality, but simultaneously takes part in the civilising mission of a dog-turned-human. The novella begins when the professor finds a stray dog on the streets of Moscow which he lures into his seven-room apartment. Here he conducts a medical experiment which inadvertently turns the dog into a human. After the surgery, the professor's civilising mission commences, while the dog-turned-human is also under the influence of the devout communist, Shvonder. Both civilising missions end up failing, but the striking thing about the civilising missions by Preobrazhenskii and Shvonder is not that they fail, but rather they do not take place in a peripheral region, or even in the centre of the Empire, but rather in the very centre of the Professor's existence: his home. This emphasises how far reaching the Soviet method of self-colonisation was, and how significant the transition from tsarism to Bolshevism was in terms of values, ideology, and behaviour.

Chapter VI, which analyses Platonov's *The Foundation Pit*, is a continuation of this theme, where the colonisation efforts were much closer to the notion of self, as the Soviet authorities created a discourse in which the peasantry as a whole was cast as 'other,' through the use of the term *kulak*,

---

Periods (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 134-167; Jeremy Smith, "Was there a Soviet National Policy?" *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 71, no. 6 (2019), 972-993.

which painted the peasantry as greedy. Once again there is the emergence of a superfluous character in the midst of a colonisation effort in the form of the dekulakisation of the collective farm. The superfluous man, Voshchev, takes part in the actions against the peasantry while feeling an enormous sense of meaninglessness with the job he is performing. However, we see in Platonov's work a second superfluous character, Elisei: a defected middle-peasant under suspicion for being a *kulak* who has joined the proletariat at the foundation pit. The suspicion felt by his coworkers prevents him from succeeding as a proletarian which makes him superfluous as he is under constant threat of being exposed. In this way, self-colonisation and superfluity can appear with two different angles: Voshchev is a (self-)coloniser as well as superfluous, while Elisei is superfluous while being colonised. The same is true of Fliagin, as we have seen.

The juxtaposition of various modes of colonisation with the appearance of the superfluous man in literature, that will be presented over the course of the dissertation, showcases the relation between literary production and reality that blurs the boundary between the two phenomena. The works that are analysed using self-colonisation theory will be accompanied with deep concern to the historical context in which they were written, and as such their characters are seen as taken out of reality and placed into the literary world of fiction. The relation between reality and fiction is perhaps no more blurred than it will appear in Chapter VII which analyses Shalamov's documentary prose, which stipulates that the characters take part in the lived reality of the phenomena they describe. Chapter VII examines superfluity in a classless society, which deviates significantly from the imperial era, which was characterised by clear distinctions between classes in the Table of Ranks. The two preceding chapters, although taking place in the same iteration of the Soviet Union, are highly concerned with classes expressed in the professor's desire to cling on to his former noble status and the foundation pit's workers' desire to eliminate the class of *kulaki*.

Chapter VII examines how the Soviet Empire exploited their enormous territory to discard unwanted and superfluous citizens from the centre to the periphery where they could be useful in the development of peripheral lands through labour in mining, agriculture and other industries. The Gulag itself had a twofold function: it punished citizens and colonised lands. In doing so, however, it created a world that was completely detached from the rest of society, and the Gulag is examined as a separate world through Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales*. The detachedness of the world contributes to the sense of superfluity, as does the extremely cold climate in the Kolyma region, which the authorities use to their advantage. This simultaneously underscores the disregard for life that the Soviet authorities exhibited. If a prisoner survived, they would be utilised for labour, if not, another one would take

their place. That is, the Gulag cements the role of superfluity in the Soviet Empire's self-colonisation machine.

In its particular theoretical and methodological approach, this dissertation represents groundbreaking research which reveals how deeply connected Russian literary production is with the narrative of self-colonisation. The dissertation will furthermore open for studies in Russian literature that focuses on how self-colonisation and other components of Russian imperialism affect works of literature, while it could potentially also spark studies of self-colonisation in other contexts than the Russian. While this dissertation's findings represent radically different material from established research in Russian literature, there will be potential to establish a new school of thought within Russian cultural and literary studies, as well as the study of Russia as a colonising empire, which will (hopefully) endure for a long time and inspire researchers in future generations.

As Russia has re-established itself as a colonising empire in the twenty-first century, most recently reiterated with the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, research in Russian imperial structures and the cultural products that sprang from it remains immensely important. In a recent article Tetiana Bogachenko and Olga Oleinikova argue, "Russia resembles the European empires much more than it wants to admit – and it is a comparison that bears on the country's present and future."[73] Therefore, research in these topics will be crucial in the coming years as the West attempts to navigate the political climate as the second cold war is underway.

[73] Tetiana Bogachenko & Olga Oleinikova "The Ghosts of 'Internal Colonisation': Anthropogenic Impacts of Russian Imperial Ambitions in Ukraine," *Ethnicities*, vol. 0, no. 0 (Dec. 2023), p. 5

Part I
Self-Othering in Centre and Periphery: The Perception of Self in Russian Imperial Era Literature (1790-1916)

Chapter I

On the Road to Superfluity:

Dissecting Russian Coloniality through *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*

> I glanced about myself: my soul became lacerated by the sufferings of humanity. I directed my gaze to my inner being and beheld that the woes of man come from man, and often only because we do not inspect closely [*vziraet nepriamo*] what surrounds us.[74]
>
> Alexandr Radishchev, 1790

When Alexandr Radishchev (1749-1802) published *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* (*Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu*, 1790), Empress Catherine II (ruled 1762-96) immediately banned it. The unfortunate timing of its publication, shortly after the French revolution and with the Pugachev uprising (1773-75) still in fresh memory, contributed to the book being banned.[75] However, it was especially the work's subject matter – criticising serfdom, autocracy, and censorship – which enraged the Empress. The intention with the creation of his work, which was never widely read by Radishchev's contemporaries, is revealed in the dedication of his prose work quoted above. Here Radishchev stipulates that he wanted to draw the attention of Russia's intellectuals to the suffering endured by the peasantry residing outside the Empire's two metropoles, St. Petersburg and Moscow. For this crime, Radishchev was initially sentenced to death, although the sentence was changed to a ten-year exile in Siberia.[76]

As this chapter tracks the movement of Radishchev's traveller-narrator, setting off from St. Petersburg toward Moscow, it will reveal that Radishchev's protagonist realises the suffering of the peasants and the injustice of the law, before he realises the suffering of the colonised peoples in

---

[74] Alexander Radishchev, *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, translated by Andrew Kahn & Irina Reyfman, (New York: University of Columbia Press, 2020), p. 1; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu* (St. Petersburg: *s.n.*, 1905), p. 1

[75] See Michael Breger, "In a Sentimental Mode: The Literary and Philosophical Strains of Dissent in Alexander Radishchev's Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow," *Western Tributaries*, vol. 7 (2021), p. 4. For sources on Catherine's attitude towards censorship, see for instance Charles A. Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press 1804-1906* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 16-23; Isabel de Madariaga, "Catherine the Great" in H.M. Scott (ed.) *Enlightened Absolutism – Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth Century Europe* (London: Palgrave, 1990), pp. 289-311; Elise Kimmerling Wirtschafter, *Russia's Age of Serfdom – 1649-1861* (Malden, MA, Oxford, UK and Carlton, VIC: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 153-165; Douglas Smith, "Alexander Radishchev's *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* and the Limits to Freedom of Speech in the Reign of Catherine the Great" in Elizabeth Powers (ed.), *Freedom of Speech: The History of an Idea* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011), pp. 61-80.

[76] See Allen McConnell, *A Russian Philosophe – Alexander Radishchev 1749-1802*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1964), pp. 106-151; Rodolphe Baudin, "The Public Self and the Intimate Body in Radishchev's Letters from Exile, *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 50, nos. 3-4 (2008), pp. 297-324

Russia's periphery. The juxtapositions of suffering peasants and suffering colonised peoples is defining for the work and is showed by the symbols of the wealth the peasantry creates for the ruling elite with images of the territorial expansion of the Russian Empire seen in the chapter "Spasskaia Polest'." Chapters such as "Chudovo" further contributes to the emergence of this narrative as Radishchev's traveller takes great offence at what he identifies as 'barbarity' by a Russian official in the imperial capital. As such, Radishchev's work emerges as the first literary work referring to Russia's colonial endeavours which highlights the suffering of Russians. The work may, thus, represent an early contribution to the emergence of the misleading narrative that Russia colonised itself to a greater extent than it colonised others. While *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* exposed the Russian Empire as a state exploiting its citizens living just beyond the borders of its metropoles, it also represented Russian identity as having been framed by an imperialistic worldview, in which Russians had the right to exploit peoples constructed as other by the imperial discourse.

The cause for the equation between Russia's modes of colonisation could be Radishchev's views on the natural law thesis, which stipulates that everyone should be treated as equal to the law. As such, Radishchev echoes the tendency among European intellectuals of the Enlightenment, such as Rousseau, Diderot, Locke and others, to argue for the equality between peoples. However, as Andrew Kahn has noted, Radishchev was not as radical in his own philosophy. Instead, Radishchev never freed his own serfs and seemed to concede that the Russian state functioned best with autocracy and oligarchy.[77] This hesitancy to conclusively call for a new political reality in Russia, is also seen in the traveller-narrator's attitude toward the law. He recognizes its inherent injustice but is resigned to accept that any change of the law is improbable. Given his resignation toward change and his sense of apathy, the traveller-narrator emerges as an early iteration of the superfluous man who dominated Russian literary production in the nineteenth century, and a precursor of the sense of superfluity which would engulf Russian society and literary characters in the centuries to come.

Through a dissection of Russian coloniality, focusing on the significance of the Russian Empire's metropoles, the analysis of Radishchev's *magnus opus* will reveal how it forebodes not only the ubiquitousness of the superfluous man as mentioned, but also the remarkable tendency amongst Russian authors to orientalise their own country and people. Over the course of this chapter, I will analyse various instances in Radishchev's work in which the focus mainly remains on Russia's colonisation of itself at the Russian core. I will show how, in exposing the tendency to subjugate the

---

[77] Andrew Kahn, "Alexander Radishchev's *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*: The Defence of Natural Rights and the Right to Self-defence" in Xavier Márquez (ed.), *Democratic Moments: Reading Democratic Texts* (London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 92-93

peasantry, Radishchev makes use of references to so-called 'Asiatic customs' in an effort to highlight the 'backwardness' and 'uncivility' of these practises. This, however, exposes the self-contradictory nature of Russian narratives of self-colonisation. While arguing against the institution of serfdom, Radishchev's protagonist seems to turn a blind eye to the suffering of the indigenous populations under the whip of Russian imperialism.

Initiating Contact: The (Mis-)Identification of the Peasant and the Realisation of Injustice

Journey from Petersburg to Moscow records an imaginary journey in the space between the two metropoles of the Russian Empire – St. Petersburg and Moscow. St. Petersburg was established by Peter I in the early eighteenth century and was created to be an embodiment of the Petrine cultural policies according to which Russia should adopt the European cultural value systems (see Chapter IV). Meanwhile, Moscow represents the historic capital which rose to importance during the so-called 'Tartar Yoke,'[78] and was established as the 'third Rome,' the new centre of Orthodoxy after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The Muscovian rise to importance, furthermore, established the Russian state as an expanding entity, first (re-)conquering the lands of the fallen Kyivan Rus, and then subsequently conquering lands with no cultural ties to the state structure from which the Russians claimed their heritage. In this sense, Radishchev's traveller-narrator is metaphorically moving from the outward looking St. Petersburg back to the origins of the modern Russian state: from the place where Russia officially became an empire, to the place from which its status as an Empire was ensured.[79]

The chapters of Radishchev's work are all named after each stop the traveller-narrator makes on the postal route he travels by. As the journey progresses, Radishchev's plea to the Russian nobles about engaging with the suffering of the people beyond the borders of Russia's metropoles, comes to fruition through the traveller-narrator, as he realises the injustice under which the nation's serfs are suffering. Additionally, the traveller-narrator will, over the course of his journey, through dream sequences realise the crooked ideals on which the Russian Empire was built, which justified violence and expansion through the ideology of absolutism. Thus, it is not the physical journey that is the

---

[78] Epoch of colonisation by the Mongol Golden Horde of the former Kyivan Rus lands from ca. 1237 to 1480.

[79] On the relationship between the Russian capitals see for instance: Olga Gritsai & Herman van der Wusten, "Moscow and St. Petersburg, a Sequence of Capitals, a Tale of Two Cities," *GeoJournal*, vol. 51 (2000), pp. 33-45; Alexander Shevyrev, "The Axis Petersburg-Moscow: Outward and Inward Russian Capitals," *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 30, no. 1 (Nov. 2003), pp. 70-84; T. G. Nefedova & A. I. Treivish, "Russia Between Two Capitals: Specifics of Territorial Changes," *Regional Research of Russia*, vol. 4, no. 4 (2014), pp. 31-43

work's subject-matter, but rather the individual growth and spiritual awakening of the traveller-narrator. As Valeria Sobol also argues:

> Radishchev's complex work records not so much a physical voyage across the space between the Russian capitals (…) as an internal journey of the narrator, a Russian nobleman, towards the truth about the Russian State and the horrific condition of its *narod*. The exotic "other" discovered by the narrator in the course of his journey is indeed the suffering Russian peasant.[80]

Serfdom was the condition under which the largest group of the population lived in 1790. The serfs (and peasants in general) mostly lived in the countryside near the two Russian capitals. In 1762, 93.7 percent of the male population (or 7,971,834 people) were peasants. Of those, 55.47 percent (or 4,422,021 people) were enserfed.[81] In 1858-59 60 million people lived in the Russian Empire, 48 million of which were peasants (state peasants, who were not enserfed, and proprietary peasants who were). This means that serfs, in the late 1850s, comprised 37.7 percent of the population, or 22.5 million people.[82] However, in the areas around Moscow and St. Petersburg serfs could comprise up to 70 percent of the population.[83] While some serfs were Old Believers and even fewer Tatars, there were millions of serfs among the Orthodox Slavic peoples, especially Russians,[84] and the concentration of serfs would be higher the closer one moved to the core of the Russian Empire.[85] What Radishchev reveals over the course of his imaginary journey between Russia's capitals, is not, however, solely the discriminatory laws under which the peasantry lived, but rather how the subjugation of Russia's *narod* in his eyes was similar to the suppression of indigenous peoples taking place in the Russian periphery.

However, as we will see, the traveller's realisation that the Russian peasants are suffering, leads to a wider realisation that Russia is oppressing peoples everywhere in its enormous territory. By commenting on the cruelty with which the Russian Empire treated the peoples it colonised in its periphery, Radishchev's traveller-narrator highlights the discrimination with which the Empire treated its peasants. This results in an orientalisation of the Empire's structures and institutions at its

---

[80] Valeria Sobol, "Internal Orientalism…" p. 244
[81] Wirtschafter, *Russia's Age of Serfdom…* p. 92
[82] Pipes, *Russia Under…* p. 144
[83] Pipes, *Russia Under…* p. 144-145
[84] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 125. See also Willard Sunderland, "The Greatest Emancipator: Abolition and Empire in Tsarist Russia," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 93 (2021), p. 568 for an estimation of the ethnic demographics of the emancipated serfs in 1861.
[85] Hosking, *Russia…* p. 199. David Moon assesses that in as late as 1897, peasants still mainly resided in the areas around Russia's metropoles. See Moon, *The Russian Peasantry…* p 18.

core, but no condemnation of Russia's external- or internal colonisation is found. The narration orientalises the Russian Empire by criticising Russian institutions, as well as Russian cultural identity, which was meant to be enlightened and westernised, by representing it as something 'other.' In St. Petersburg, which was supposed to be the most culturally advanced city in the country, its population is presented as 'barbaric,' and the autocratic form of governance, embodied by this city built on the backs of suffering serfs, is presented as the cause for the country's injustice, which manifests itself most clearly in the institution of serfdom. Perhaps, by moving 'back' to the capital of the origins of Russianness, the traveller-narrator hopes to find the 'true' ideals of Russian identity. Instead, what he finds is an Empire claiming superior levels of enlightenment, colonising peoples both in the periphery of the Empire, as well as in the core.

The journey of the traveller-narrator of *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*, the purpose of which is never made clear to the reader, is one through space, but also through time. As he moves from the outward-looking St. Petersburg, toward the old capital of Moscow, he moves from the symbol Russia's Western-like identity toward the symbol of Russia's Pan-Slavic and Orthodox values. The aspect of time is clear from the very instant the traveller's carriage leaves St. Petersburg when the traveller complains about the poor conditions of the roads.[86] He soon embarks on his spiritual journey, during which he realises the injustices that burdens the space between the capitals. He does so through conversations with other travellers, reading documents that are either handed to him or he finds by coincidence. The narrator is thus a medium through whom the anecdotes, experiences, and opinions of others flow. However, the traveller also becomes more and more outraged about the stories he incurs, which all in some form or other relate to the Russian Empire. As Douglas Smith argues, "[t]he reader (...) is made a witness to [the narrator's] indignation as he encounters example after example of injustice, turpitude, and corruption."[87] As the journey progresses, the traveller-narrator's outrage manifests itself in his dreams, which further contributes to his spiritual journey and sense of injustice in Russian imperialism.

The narrative begins in a manner akin to travel literature in which a noble in a horse-drawn carriage sets off on a long journey. In the majority of the chapters in *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*, the narrator is the medium through whom the story of another character is narrated. This manifests itself in long monologues of people he meets or in letters or documents the narrator cites. Every chapter of the novel can be read independently from the others; each is essentially its own

[86] Radishchev, *Journey from…* p. 9; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* p. 8
[87] Smith, "Alexander Radishchev's *Journey…*" p. 64

narrative. The traveller-narrator begins each narration (apart from a few exceptions) with his arrival at a postal station. The narrator often enters into conversation with someone there, and the narrative develops often by a secondary character narrating. This type of frame narrative is an often-used device, and it resembles the frames created in the openings of Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* (see Chapter II) and Nikolai Leskov's *The Enchanted Wanderer* (see Chapter III). These frames also resemble the opening of Joseph Conrad's famous anti-colonialist work, *Heart of Darkness* (1899). All these narratives begin with some form of transportation (either by boat or carriage), in which the narrators meet someone they do not know, who recounts a story to the principal narrator. In *A Hero of Our Time* Maxim Maximych recounts the story of Pechorin's conquest of a young Circassian woman, Bela, before handing the principal narrator Pechorin's diary. In *The Enchanted Wanderer* Fliagin tells his life story while travelling by boat on Lake Ladoga, and in *Heart of Darkness* Marlow recites the story to the principal narrator of his journey through colonial Congo to find Mr. Kurtz, while travelling up the Thames.

While these works incorporate similar frame narratives, what distinguishes the Russian works from Conrad's, is that their narratives take place within the borders of their own country. The comparison with a work which exposes the colonialism and racism embedded in European imperial praxis overseas, makes the self-othering that defines these works, as we shall discover, even more remarkable. The Russian authors continually orientalise their own country and the people who live in it, and thus establish their own country as an 'Oriental other.' What further distinguishes Radishchev from Lermontov and Leskov is how close to the centre of the Empire he situates his story. Lermontov's work takes place in the Caucasus, which is not fully under Russian control, while Leskov's work takes place in a variety of locations, including St. Petersburg and the Ryn Desert in present-day Kazakhstan. The geographic location of the traveller's journey makes Radishchev's portrayal of Russia as a 'backward' and 'uncivilised' country much more striking, since he, as a member of the nobility, emerges as a coloniser, who shares ethnicity, language, and religious beliefs with the people who are self-colonised at the Empire's core.

The traveller-narrator encounters one such self-colonised subject, a serf, early on in his journey in the chapter "Lyubani." As we have seen, serfdom was the main method with which the Russian Empire colonised its ethnic Russian population, and it was extremely prevalent in the space near the Empire's capitals. Even so, the metropolitan elite were largely unaware of, or perhaps even indifferent to, the conditions of the *narod*. Radishchev comments on this in one of the early chapters of the work when the traveller-narrator meets a peasant ploughing his field on a Sunday. Inside his

horse-drawn carriage the traveller-narrator had been deep in thought about "the immeasurability of the world,"[88] before exiting his carriage to get relief from the rocking motion on the bumpy road. As Ani Kokobobo writes:

> The bad road creates a phenomenological bond between narrator and his surroundings, forcing him to step out of his carriage and his abstract thoughts. (…) His ties to the road ensure awareness of his physical environment.[89]

The narrator's journey, which is both physical and metaphysical, does not manifest itself in his philosophising about the grandness of the world from inside his carriage, but only when he leaves his carriage and examines the setting he is moving through more closely. Indeed, after exiting his carriage in "Lyubani," the traveller-narrator concludes that "spiritual exercises do not always distract us from corporeality,"[90] and soon he is faced with the corporeality of a hard-working enserfed peasant. However, the narration does not present a visual description of the serf. Instead, the traveller-narrator focuses on depicting a hard-working peasant, running his plough with skill and ease: "The peasant plows with great diligence [*tshchaniem'*]. (…) He turns the plow with unbelievable ease,"[91] the traveller-narrator thinks to himself. As we have seen, serfs working the fields in central Russia was not an unusual occurrence, but it seems as if the narrator has come across something he has never seen before, as he is impressed with the peasant's skills. This instance shows very well the purpose of the work, which is to "inspect closely what surrounds us,"[92] as Radishchev pleaded in his dedication of his work.

The traveller-narrator is puzzled, when he realises that the peasant is working his field on a Sunday and concludes therefore that the peasant must be an Old-Believer.[93] But the traveller quickly learns that the peasant observes Orthodoxy according to the post-Schism rules. "God is merciful," the peasant tells him, "when one has strength and family, He does not will [*velit*] one to die of hunger."[94] The traveller-narrator, assuming there was a cultural difference between himself and the peasant, had begun an internal process of othering the peasant, but is surprised to learn that the peasant practises

---

[88] Radishchev, *Journey*… p. 13; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie*… p. 11
[89] Ani Kokobobo, "The Travelogue and the Ode— Aleksandr Radishchev's Polemic with the Court Ode in *Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu*," *The Russian Review*, vol. 72 (Oct. 2013), p. 617
[90] Radishchev, *Journey*… p. 13; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie*… p. 11
[91] Radishchev, *Journey*… p. 13; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie*… p. 11
[92] Radishchev, *Journey*… p. 1; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie*… p. 1
[93] In 1653 Patriarch Nikon issued reforms in the Russian Orthodox church, which changed some of its rituals. For instance, the sign of the cross was from then on to be made with three fingers instead of two. This resulted in a schism, and the schismatics were referred to as Old-Believers.
[94] Radishchev, *Journey*… p. 14; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie*… p. 12

post-schism Orthodoxy. The peasant explains to him that he is working on his owner's land six days a week and works his own small field at night and on Sundays to feed his spouse and six children.[95] In sum, the peasant has no choice but to work all week to not let his family starve.

The institution of serfdom at first glance has nothing to do with the Russian Empire's conduct in its colonies. However, it is remarkable that it was primarily the Empire's Slavic peoples that were subject to enserfment, and that the colonised peoples of Siberia, the Caucasus and Central Asia were hardly ever enserfed. There seems to be no justification as to why the Orthodox Slavs were perceived as being better fitted to be enserfed than indigenous peoples in Russia's colonies, as Etkind writes: "Neither the church, nor the state, nor the intelligentsia formulated anything equivalent to the American planters' belief that African Americans were fit for slavery and Native Americans were not."[96] Therefore, the Russian authorities had to construct a justification for the enserfment of the Slavic Orthodox peoples, a cultural difference which could establish a clear visible sign of their otherness, or as Etkind bluntly puts it, "the Russian Empire needed a substitute for race…"[97]

Homi Bhabha demonstrates in *The Location of Culture* (1994) the importance for colonial authority to establish a cultural difference between the coloniser and colonised. According to Bhabha, the establishment of cultural difference enables the colonising power to enunciate and identify the aspects of the colonised culture in need of 'higher levels of enlightenment' and furthermore to discriminate based on these aspects and differences.[98] This establishes a discourse which justifies the subjugation of the other, who in this instance emerges as the Russian peasant. As Etkind argues, "[t]he orientalization of serfs was a part of the cognitive machinery of serfdom: treating humans like property, one needed to construct a difference between them and oneself."[99] In other words, the absence of a racial difference between the coloniser and the colonised in the institution of serfdom, meant that the Russian authorities needed a physical sign of otherness in its peasant population.

Etkind identifies Peter I's infamous beard tax of 1698 as a method with which Russian authorities established a cultural difference between the peasants and the nobility. While the generally accepted view of this policy remains that it was part of Peter's efforts to modernise Russian high society and institutions, Etkind argues that the beard tax was in fact created to make it easier for authorities to differentiate between peasants and city-dwellers.[100] Directed at the nobility, the reform

---

[95] Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 14; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* p. 12
[96] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 125
[97] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 101
[98] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 50
[99] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 106
[100] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* pp. 101-102

required people to remain clean-shaven according to European fashion standards, whereas the clergy and peasantry were allowed to keep their beards. While Etkind's claims on this matter are somewhat unsubstantiated, that is, the only evidence presented in his book is that the beard tax did not apply to the peasantry, there may still be some truth to the claim. Although Evgenii Akelev assesses that "not one of the tsar's well-known decrees or letters lays out his motivations for prohibiting beards,"[101] Akelev finds clues that the introduction of the beard tax may have been to distance ethnically Russian people from so-called 'uncivilised peoples' whose beards Peter allegedly viewed as a sign of 'barbarity:'

> Peter and his supporters (…) appear to have viewed the customary practice of growing a long beard as a visual code signaling membership in an "impolitic" (or uncivilized) people. The battle with the beard was, for Peter, a struggle against elements of barbarism, against customs that were "Busurman," or inherited from Tatars.[102]

In other words, the beard tax was a method with which to make the nobility appear more 'enlightened,' which potentially served the secondary purpose of highlighting the 'backwardness' of the peasantry as well as the Empire's colonised peoples who retained the custom of growing long beards. The beard tax also shows that Europeanisation was a service the Empire granted to its higher strata, while no such service was handed to the peasantry. After the introduction of the reform, a clean-shaven face became a symbol of wealth, power, and civilisation, while the peasants' beards signified 'barbarity' and 'backwardness'. Thus, the beard tax serves as an example of how the peasantry were seen as unfit for Europeanisation reforms.

In "Lyubani" Radishchev's narrator gives no description of the peasant's appearance; all we know is that he is a serf, and he is working the field with skill. Whichever image that may have left the reader of late eighteenth century Russia, one could imagine that the peasant would be dirty from working a muddy field, sweaty from his hard labour, and crucially, have a long beard. But no description of his physical appearance is presented to us, and instead the focus is on the fact that he practises the same faith as the travelling noble, that he ploughs his field with ease, and that he is motivated by the need to feed his family. Of course, the traveller is from the Europeanised centre of Russia, whereas the peasant is from the countryside untouched by Europeanisation reforms, and there is a significant difference in social class and wealth too. But most importantly, the noble and the peasant practise the same faith and speak the same language, highlighted by the absence of a physical

[101] Akelev, "The Barber of All Russia… p. 243
[102] Akelev, "The Barber of All Russia…" p. 246

description of the peasant. The meeting with the hard-working peasant triggers in the traveller-narrator a sense of injustice in the way the Empire treats its peasant population. "[W]ho gave you power over him?" the narrator asks himself rhetorically. "The law. – The law?"[103]

In "Lyubani" the traveller engages himself with what surrounds him for the first time. The chapter takes place on the day after he left St. Petersburg, thus he is not far from home. This might further contribute to the traveller-narrator's sense of injustice: people on the doorstep of the Empire's capital are suffering. The encounter with the peasant, and the traveller-narrator's reflections on the peasant-question afterwards, is an expression of the traveller-narrator's growth on his spiritual journey. Perhaps due to the nature of the Empire's laws, the traveller had assumed there was a cultural difference between himself and the peasant, which could justify the Empire's subjugation of them. But the traveller-narrator to his surprise instead finds a compatriot with whom he shares cultural heritage. The traveller-narrator, having been shielded from exposure to the suffering peasants in his relatively luxurious city life, finds it difficult to interpret the situation where the serf is forced to work his field on the day of rest.

"Lyubani" is a very short chapter of *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* and one that represents a blind spot in academia. However, it stands out among the many other chapters in Radishchev's work in that it does not take place at a postal stop, but rather on the road. In this way, "Lyubani" shows Radishchev's intentions with his work: to bring to the attention of the nobility in the Russian cities the hardships of the peasants and the injustice of the law. While the traveller-narrator only by chance steps out his carriage to get relief from the bumpy road, it does put him in a situation in which he can engage with what surrounds him, namely the enserfed peasants. A serf working a field to feed his family was not a common sight for the St. Petersburg and Moscow elites. It is only when the traveller-narrator exits his carriage, which shields him from the reality and corporeality of the serfs, that his eyes are opened to the suffering of the Russian people.

While "Lyubani" only shows very little of the traveller-narrator's attitudes toward serfdom, the meeting with the peasant ploughing his field on a Sunday, becomes the catalyst for the concern with the peasant question that is defining for the rest of Radishchev's work. In the next subsection, however, we shall see not how Radishchev's traveller envisions a solution to this question, but rather how he orientalises central Russia, its people, its form of governance, and its laws by referring to both the Russian colonised territories, but also territories colonised by Western imperial powers.

[103] Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 16; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* pp. 14

The following analysis of Radishchev's work will show how *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* criticises the Russian state power through references to so-called 'Asiatic customs,' that is, through narratives of self-othering and self-Orientalisation. It will be argued that Radishchev establishes the connection between the expanding Russian Empire and the emergence of the superfluous man and the sense of superfluity in general. While referencing external colonisation, Radishchev's protagonist draws attention to the suffering Russian peasantry, but the traveller-narrator remains doubtful that any change to the situation of the peasantry will occur, and in this way Radishchev foregrounds the connection between the concept of superfluity and Russian colonialism.

Orientalising Russia: Self-Orientalism and Superfluity in *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*

The orientalisation of Central Russia and the Empire's state structures is a recurring theme in *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*, as Valeria Sobol argues: "[This work] consistently orientalizes Russia, undermining therefore its official image as an enlightened Europeanized state."[104] This in itself is indicative of the nature of the Russian Empire in which both centre and periphery was colonised, but is also an expression of the Russian intellectuals' obsession with Central Russia and its disregard of the conditions under which indigenous peoples at the Empire's borders lived. However, Radishchev creates countless references to so-called Asiatic customs, and stories of colonialism and Orientalism are intermingled with stories of Russian bureaucracy, not for the sake of contrast, but for the sake of comparison.

For instance, in the chapter "Khotilov," the traveller finds a document labelled "Project for the Future," in which someone has sketched out a plan for the abolition of serfdom in Russia. In this document, its author writes:

> The bestial custom of enslaving one's fellow man, a custom that originated in the torrid regions of Asia, a custom suited to savage nations, a custom signifying a petrified heart and complete absence of soul, spread across the face of the earth, quickly, far, and wide. And we, the sons of glory, we, glorious by name and deeds among the peoples of the earth, stunned by the benightedness of ignorance, have adopted this practice; and have maintained it intact even to the present day to our shame, to the shame of past centuries, to the shame of this Age of Reason.[105]

[104] Sobol, "Internal Orientalism…" p. 242
[105] Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 130; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* pp. 134-135

This strongly worded passage is meant to expose the ‘backwardness’ of the Russian tradition of enserfment by creating a similarity between Russia and non-specific Asian nations perceived as ‘barbaric.’ It draws on the enlightenment movement in Western Europe, especially the natural law thesis, which stipulates that everyone should be equal to the law. Serfdom, thus, is the prime example of the absence of equal rights for the Russian people. However, the passage also shows a deep prejudice toward non-Russian nations. Orientalising Russia in this fashion, by comparing the country and its institutions to the customs of ill-defined Asian nations, is indicative of Radishchev’s attitude towards Russia, in which he continually represents Russia using an orientalist discourse. However, this passage also reiterates the contradiction in the document’s author’s (and perhaps Radishchev’s) labelling of enslavement as an ‘Asiatic custom.’ Specifically, this seems odd when thinking of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the enslavement of Africans in the Caribbean and North America, which was still ongoing when Radishchev wrote his work criticising Russia’s enserfment of its peasantry and comparing it with a supposed ‘Asiatic custom’ of enslavement. This highlights the fact that the document’s author uses the term Asiatic as shorthand for barbarity and serves as another example that the Russian intellectuals were more concerned with the suffering of their compatriots working the fields in Central Russia.

Labelling slavery Asiatic becomes even more contradictory when the author of this “Project for the Future” also compares serfdom to slavery in the United States, and to the slaves who built the Egyptian pyramids. Especially slavery in the United States is, like the institution of serfdom, an example of exploitation of populations to the benefit of the ruling elite, although it includes the element of racism, which was absent in Russian serfdom. “How can we call a land blessed,” the author asks, “in which a hundred proud citizens wallow in luxury while thousands lack secure provision and their own shelter from heat and frost?”[106] This line clearly shows one of the main mechanisms of self-colonisation narratives, representing the exploitation of the peasantry, while questioning Russia’s status as part of enlightened Western Europe. The comparisons with Ancient Egypt and the United States are interesting too: Ancient Egypt arguably laid the foundations (perhaps along with Ancient Greece, in which slavery was also practised) to modern Western civilisation, while the United States faced similar challenges to the Russian Empire; they claimed a place within Western Enlightenment, but still refused a large group of people access to be judged according to the rule of law. The ruling elite in Russia and the United States benefitted from the exploitation of the suffering serfs and slaves working the fields within the borders of these continental empires.

[106] Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 136; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* p. 141

The orientalisation of Russia continues in a different fashion in the chapter "Spasskaia Polest'." Here a utopia forms itself before the eyes of the dreaming traveller-narrator. *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* is laden orientalist references, but there is no other chapter, in which the orientalist symbols are as prominent as in "Spasskaia Polest'." In this chapter the traveller-narrator recounts a dream in which he sees himself on the throne as a very successful and just ruler.

> Around me were disposed signs attesting my power. Here a sword lay on a column carved from silver. On it were depicted naval and land battles, the conquest of cities, and more in that vein. Everywhere at the top one could see my name, borne by the Genius of Fame, flying over all these triumphs. Here my scepter was visible, laid out on sheaves laden with wheaten spokes carved out of pure gold and imitating nature perfectly.[107]

However, the traveller-turned-autocrat is blind to all the signs attesting to his exploitation of the population. The population praises him for pacifying external enemies, conquering land, incorporating many nationalities, facilitating commerce, arts and science. The traveller's dream is clearly an allegory on the Russian Empire. Russia had seen expansions in Poland and Ukraine under Catherine II and was beginning to move further south into the Caucasus. But the traveller is unable to see the underlying suffering in the signs attesting to his power: the conquest of cities, naturally cannot occur without bloodshed, while the sceptre depicting spokes of wheat covered in gold, implies the exploitation of the peasantry to the benefit of the ruling elite, that is, it is a symbol of the institution of serfdom.

The autocrat is oblivious to the suffering he is causing. He is blinded, because of the fear his rule has caused in the population: no one dares but praise him. A.O. Shelemova and Faezech Karimian compare the blindness of the traveller-turned-autocrat with the deception of Catherine II by Grigoriy Potemkin in the case of the so-called Potemkin villages.[108] However, he is then visited by a character called Truth [*Istina*], who removes the cataracts from the ruler's eyes, so that he can see,[109] and what he sees is a frightening attestation of suffering.

[107] Radishchev, *Journey*... p. 37; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie*… pp. 36-37

[108] A.O. Shelemova & Faezech Karimian, "*Retseptsiia vostochnogo motiva v proizvedeniiakh A.N. Radishcheva i I.A. Krylova* (The Perception of Oriental Motifs in the Works by A.N. Radishchev and I.A. Krylov)" *Vestnik RUDN*, no. 4 (2012), p. 86

[109] Radishchev, *Journey*... p. 42; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie*... p. 42

> My garments, brilliant as they were, seemed spattered with blood and drenched in tears. On my fingers I could see the remains of a human brain, my feet stood in mire. Those standing around me looked even more vile. Their entire innards looked black and consumed by the dull flame of insatiability.[110]

Suddenly, the ruler becomes aware of the suffering people as he sees that he literally has blood on his hands. After the visit from Truth, the traveller-turned-autocrat understands where his power comes from: the exploitation of his subjects. The traveller-narrator, once he awakes, also "understood wherefrom [he] derive[s] [his] right and power [and] was shaken to the core of [his] being."[111] Thus, the dream forms an important part of the traveller-narrator's internal journey. While realising where the Russian Empress gains her power, he realises that he himself is in a powerful position due to these same incongruities and inequalities in the law. That the traveller here is not recounting a story through a medium, means that the dream itself can be seen as a symbol of his own spiritual growth. Over the course of the journey his blindness to suffering is cured.

In the chapter "Chudovo," which takes place in St. Petersburg, the very centre of the Empire, Radishchev represents the most culturally advanced (or perceived as such) Russian city and the mentality of its population as resting on a 'barbaric' foundation. At a postal station, the traveller-narrator meets his friend, Ch…, who tells him about an incident that happened to him in the imperial capital, which led him to make the decision to leave the city. Initially, St. Petersburg is presented as a window to Europe, playing on the discourse surrounding Peter I's establishment of the city, as well as a centre for mercantilism. As Ch…'s story develops, it moves beyond this paradigm to instead bring into focus the disregard for human life which encumbered not only the Empire's bureaucracy, but also the capital's population.

Ch… recounts his trip from Kronstadt in the Gulf of Finland to St. Petersburg by ship. Soon after setting sail, a storm overcomes their ship, and it becomes lodged between two rocks and begins taking in water. One of the crew members, Pavel, decides to get help and leaves the ship, while the remaining crew members and passengers work hard to keep water out of the ship. Eventually, the crew and passengers are saved. But Ch… is filled with rage upon hearing what happened to Pavel. He had gone to alert the sergeant of the local guard, but upon arrival he learns that the sergeant is asleep in his office. His assistant does not dare to wake him. Enraged, Pavel then forces his entrance to the office and wakes the sergeant demanding that he helps the twenty people who are trapped at

---

[110] Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 44; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* p. 45
[111] Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 48; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* p. 49

sea. But the sergeant simply grabs Pavel by the arms and shoves him out of his office.[112] "[R]age entered into my heart. Is it possible, I said to myself, that in our age, in Europe, near the capital, in sight of a great ruler such inhumanity occurred?"[113] This incident is playing out in the supposed most Westernised region of Russia and Ch… is shocked at the barbarity of the sergeant, who is not willing to save the people trapped on the ship, simply because "that is not [his] duty."[114] As Sobol argues, "[a]n individual case of bureaucratic neglect provokes, in the narrator's friend, a passionate comment on contemporary European civilization as a whole – and, more importantly, on Russia as a recently integrated part of it."[115] What provokes Ch… here is not just the bureaucratic neglect, but even more so the location in which this neglect takes place. Just under the eyes of The Bronze Horseman, the symbol of Russian civilisation, a Sergeant is willing to let people die, simply because it was not his duty to save them.

In yet another allusion to 'barbaric Asiatic customs,' Ch… remembers the story of a Bengal ruler in British India, who had taken a number of Englishmen as prisoners. They were staring death in the eyes and had bribed their guards to free them. The guards wanted to, but could not, because their ruler was resting, and no one dared to wake him.[116] According to the standards of the time, the association between the Bengal ruler and the sergeant of a local guard in St. Petersburg that Ch… creates, is meant to highlight the 'barbaric' cruelty of Russian bureaucracy. To further consolidate the significance of the incident, Radishchev places this story in the most westernised region of Russia, thereby commenting on the hypocrisy of the discourse of Russia being an integrated part of European civilisation.

Once again, Radishchev is deconstructing the official imperial discourse by referring to supposed 'Asiatic customs.' But Radishchev takes it one step further: it is not only the St. Petersburg official's careless behaviour on the job that prompts Ch… to leave the city. When Ch… is recounting his story to local citizens one replies to him: "it was not prescribed as his duty to save you."[117] This is what eventually leads Ch… to leave the city for good. By his telling of this story, it is as if Ch… is calling out the artificial nature of Russian civilisation. Russia has not been westernised in Ch…'s eyes but is rather made to *look* western. St. Petersburg is *The Emperor's New Clothes*, and Ch… is the boy who dares exclaim that the emperor is naked. The vision of St. Petersburg as the window to

[112] Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 23; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* p. 22
[113] Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 24; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* p. 23
[114] Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 25; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* p. 24
[115] Sobol, "Internal Orientalism…" p. 245
[116] See footnote in Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 24; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* p. 23
[117] Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 26; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* p. 25

the west, created in the image of European cities like Amsterdam and Venice, becomes a utopia, that is, an idealistic vision of a place, but ultimately a place which does not exist. It is this realisation, that St. Petersburg is a mirage, which eventually leads Ch… to leave the city.

The internal journey of the traveller might change his views on the injustices in Russia, but he clearly does not obtain any hope of changing these injustices. The traveller might be on an internal journey (as well as a physical one), but the traveller is often nothing more than a medium, through whom the thoughts and beliefs of others are mediated. In "Khotilov" he finds a document, in other chapters people he meets tell their stories or thoughts. For instance, in "Torzhok" a man on his way to Petersburg to hand in a petition to establish freedom of the press in his city, presents his beliefs on censorship; in "Chudovo" the backwardness of St. Petersburg is presented through the story of the traveller's friend, Ch… This reduces the traveller-narrator to a mere medium. However, "Spasskaia Polest'," which emerges as the most important chapter for the traveller-narrator's internal development, is when his views, which form the basis of his attitudes toward the people he meets and stories he hears, are determined. He left St. Petersburg as a blind man, but on his journey through the heartland of Russia, he is visited by Truth and is now able to see the suffering Russian peasants as victims of Russian autocracy. This, however, does not mean that the traveller sees any possibility of changing the fate of the *narod*.

Whatever hope there was for the traveller may have been shattered by his dream in "Spasskaia Polest'," in which he realises that there is no such thing as a fair autocratic ruler. The autocrat's power will always entail the exploitation of others. In the later chapter, "Khotilov," the traveller has just read the document calling for the abolition of serfdom, but as the traveller leaves for the next station, he…

> …decided that it would be better to think about what is more suitable for the traveler by coach: that his horses proceed at a trot or amble (…) – better this than to get caught up in *what does not exist*.[118]

On this rather bleak note, the traveller leaves for the next postal station. However, this notion of not getting caught up in what does not exist, shows the hopelessness of change to the system of serfdom and the rule of autocracy, which over the course of Radishchev's work has been established as the main cause for Russia's inability to inscribe itself into European civilisation.

---

[118] Radishchev, *Journey*… p. 143 [My emphasis]; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie*… p. 149

The hopelessness that surrounds the narrator's state of mind is similar to that associated with the superfluous man, a figure that would become definitive for nineteenth-century literary production. The superfluous man is described as a character who is susceptible to ethical concerns but sees no hope of constructive change.[119] This is, as we have seen, also true of Radishchev's traveller-narrator. Like the traditional superfluous man, the traveller is of noble birth, he is an intellectual, he is dreamy (philosophising about the world's grandness), and he is sensitive to ethical problems. While this narrator does not become completely alienated from society in the fashion of a superfluous man, he does become aware of, and is affected by, the injustice he sees in the world that surrounds him.

Treating the traveller-narrator as a superfluous man, might be considered an anachronism, but the hopelessness (and maybe even uselessness) of the superfluous men, have been foreshadowed by Radishchev in *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*. This foreshadowing, however, has never been examined in scholarly articles, which may be due to the fact that academia usually analyses the superfluous man as a result of the Decembrist revolt of 1825, and not a result of the wider implications of Russian imperialism. Radishchev's traveller learns of the Empire's horrid treatment of Russian peasants and feels a sense of injustice which makes him wonder about his own role in the imperial machine. As he moves further into the countryside, he keeps relearning the same lesson, and his sense of inertia grows. What can be done? Nothing, it seems to the traveller, and a superfluous man is born.

Radishchev evidently saw his work as a means to expose the backwardness of Russia, as is reflected in his dedication of the work to his long-time friend, Alexei Mikhailovich Kutuzov, in which Radishchev writes "I sensed that everyone has the ability to participate in doing good for his equal. – This thought prompted me to write what you are about to read."[120] However, this optimism is not shared by Radishchev's traveller-narrator. Through the consistent orientalisation of Russia and the Russian people, Radishchev establishes the otherness of the Russian Empire. By doing so, he deconstructs the authority of autocracy, which has established the institution of serfdom, and is harvesting the fruits sown by the hard-working peasants just beyond the borders of the Empire's capital. The optimism showed in Radishchev's dedication to Kutuzov, is not shared by his traveller-narrator, who instead resembles a superfluous character. However, by establishing the hopelessness of change, Radishchev creates a stark criticism of Russian autocratic leadership, the abolition of which, in Radishchev's view, could lead to the abolition of serfdom, and the emancipation of the suffering Russian *narod*.

---

[119] See for instance Chances, *Conformity's Children…* pp. 17-18
[120] Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 2; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* p. 2

Such change, however, would not arrive until 1861. Up until then, and arguably after (see Chapter III & VI), Russia continued its practice of subjugating the peasant population. As we shall see in the upcoming chapters, the nature of Russian self-colonisation and narratives of self-othering continued to affect Russian literary production. While the focus this chapter was on the very central parts of the Empire, we shall in the next chapter move into the periphery, or more precisely into Russia's colonial possessions in the Caucasus. It is here that the superfluous man, ironically given his Europeanised upbringing in Russia's centre, flourishes in escapades of violence and seduction. Pechorin, the protagonist from Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*, who will be the subject of analysis, is the prime example of a superfluous man, but as the chapter will show, embedded in his character is possibly the clearest example of cultural appropriation, or self-othering, in Russian literature. Radishchev transported a city-dwelling noble character from his natural habitat into the countryside to expose the power incongruities and the 'barbarity' with which the Empire was ruled. Lermontov transports another city-dweller, not to expose Russian colonialism and racism, but rather to (mis-)use it to highlight the uncivilised nature of the Russian nation.

While the traveller-narrator and Pechorin do share some similarities, there is a crucial difference between the two: the traveller paints the otherness onto the faces of St. Petersburg's citizens, but Pechorin paints it on himself. In Lermontov's work we see the fully flourished narrative of self-colonisation, whereas Radishchev's work represents the beginning of it. The orientalisation of the Russian heartland and the Russian people after Radishchev became standard in much of Russia's literary production, and it had a profound influence on what came later. In this context, the superfluous man naturally existed, but he was not just an outcome of the failed Decembrist revolt, which many scholars have attested. It was merely a coincidence that the creation of superfluous men intensified after 1825, because as we have seen, the sense of superfluity existed in society and literature already.

Chapter II

The Main Root of All Evil:

The Superfluous Man and the 'Inverted Hybrid' in *A Hero of Our Time*

> [Peter I] saw [enlightenment] as Russia's sole salvation, and Europe as its only source. This conviction survived him by a whole century among the educated class of Russian society – or better, the class he had re-educated; and some thirty years ago you would hardly have found a thinking man who conceived the possibility of any culture other than that borrowed from Europe.[121]
>
> Ivan Kireevsky, 1852

"The main root of all evil is Western upbringing, devoid of any sense of faith,"[122] Stepan Shevyrev (1806-64), wrote in a review of Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* (1840). "Pechorin is only one spectre cast on us by the West," the critic continues, "the shadow of his disease flickering in the imagination of our poets, *un mirage de l'Occident*. There, he is the hero of the real world, we have only a hero of fantasy – and in this sense, a hero of our time..."[123] Shevyrev views Pechorin as the product of self-colonisation in the sense that the critic sees him as an outcome of the previous century's Europeanisation efforts, which had the adverse effect of casting Russia as 'East' to Europe's 'West.' That is, Shevyrev analyses Pechorin solely in relation to Western culture and fails to take issues of empire or colonialism into account. Reviews such as Shevyrev's have set the tone for more recent interpretations of Pechorin in which he is seen through the lens of the cultural debates in Russia's centres.[124] The debates, as the quotes from Kireevsky and Shevyrev above show, centred around the themes of Russia's relationship with Europe. Countless studies examine Pechorin's superfluous characteristics, and some also study his traits as a coloniser.[125] However, like Lermontov's contemporaries, scholars tend to push Pechorin's status as a coloniser to the background: if they do examine Lermontov's work through the lens of postcolonialism, they fail to

---

[121] Ivan Vasil'evich Kireevski, "On the Nature of European Culture and its Relation to the Culture of Russia – Letter to Count E. E. Komarovskii," translated by Valentine Snow, in Marc Raeff (ed.), *Russian Intellectual History* (New York, Chicago, & Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1966), p. 176

[122] Stepan Petrovich Shevyrev, "*Geroi nashego vremeni*," *Moskvitianin*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1841). [My translation here and throughout unless otherwise stated.]

[123] Shevyrev, "*Geroi nashego vremeni*"

[124] See for instance, Irina F. Shcherbatova, "Lermontov: The Failure of Humanism," *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 54, no. 2 (2016), pp. 145-159; Ekatarina Vasil'evna Belikova, "Pechorin i mirazhi Zapada" *Imagologiia i komparativistika*, vol 18 (2022), pp. 59-71; P. S. Gromova, "Napoleon v tvorcheskom soznanii M. Yu. Lermontova," *Russian Linguistic Bulletin*, vol. 56, no 8 (2024), pp. 1-4

[125] See for instance, Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*... pp. 213-219; Sobol, "The Uncanny Frontier…" pp. 65-79

acknowledge the intricacies of superfluity, its relation to empire, and its connection to Pechorin being a coloniser. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that Pechorin must be understood not solely through this lens, but also in relation to the processes of internal- and external colonisation. It is only in so doing that his superfluity can be fully understood. *A Hero of Our Time* cannot be read only in terms of Russia's relationship to the West; it must also be considered in terms of its relationship with the Caucasus.

The contemporary reviews of Lermontov's work, which will be examined in more detail later, were indicative of a cultural climate in which intellectuals were constantly looking for definitions of Russianness, even in areas that were not considered Russian, but rather considered the Orient. The sentiments presented in them show that the Caucasus was an idealised vision of the Russian Empire in which freedom, otherwise restricted in Central Russia, reigned. In scholarship to date, Pechorin is often interpreted with reference to conditions in Central Russia such as the failed Decembrist revolt and Nicholas I's subsequent despotic reign in which freedom of speech was heavily restricted and censorship strengthened. The despotism with which Russia was ruled resulted in an overwhelming sense of resignation amongst Russian intellectuals as any kind of change seemed impossible. In literary production of the time, this sense of resignation was embodied by a series of superfluous men, with Pechorin as their foremost representative. The superfluous man was a figure who either did not attempt to incite change due to his stoic nature, or if he attempted to spark change, failed. However, as will be argued in this chapter, these kinds of interpretations tend to overlook an important element of Pechorin's character.

While Pechorin conclusively belongs within the category of superfluous men, readings of his superfluous character tend to overlook his status as a coloniser and thus fail to see that his superfluity is reflected in his acts of evil which are also an expression of his disregard for the people around him, including the colonised peoples of the Caucasus. In the same way that I argued that Russia's three modes of colonisation were represented in Radishchev's *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* in Chapter I, Russia's external-, internal-, and self-colonisation can be described through Pechorin. However, where Radishchev described self-colonisation through the institution of serfdom, the kind of self-colonisation described in *A Hero of Our Time*, is a petty self-colonisation, which never impacts his physical well-being: Pechorin finds the strict rules of etiquette in the Russian *beau monde* oppressive and cannot align himself with its obsession with rank and epaulettes established by imperial decree. The issues of internal colonisation are seen in the chapter "Taman" in which Pechorin

emerges as a character struck by the uncanniness of his setting,[126] which results in violent acts that serve as a premonition of events as Pechorin moves closer to the frontier of Russian external colonisation in the Caucasus where his 'inverted hybridity' eventually blossoms. However, the qualities which he has inherited from the chaotic cultural climate in Central Russia, are not dissimilar to the qualities he picks up while in the Caucasus. In fact, his urge to subordinate others to his will, which has often been read as an expression of rebellion against the *beau monde*, can easily be transposed onto the characterisation of his figure as a coloniser.

The chapter examines both sides of the characterisations of Pechorin – those that focus on his superfluity and those that focus on him as a coloniser – and highlights the issues with both these interpretations, which result in one-sided characterisations of a multi-faceted character. The chapter then examines Pechorin in relation to Decembrism, the cultural values of the high society rebels after the failed Decembrist revolt of 1825. These values will be related to the colonising traits of Pechorin. As we shall see, the longer Pechorin stays in the Caucasus, the more his character deteriorates, eventually creating an 'inverted hybrid.' I have derived this term from the Bhabhan definition of the hybrid,[127] and it refers to a literary character who is branded by a deep injection of self-Orientalism. That is, the Bhabhan hybrid is an inscription of 'the self' in 'the other,' or a colonial subject who has been affected by colonial civilisational policies and has thus assumed the image of their oppressor, but the 'inverted hybrid' instead assumes the image of the ones they have oppressed. This will be examined in further detail below, as well as the connection of this term with Rebecca Gould's identification of the *abrek*-character in Caucasian literature,[128] and the term *kavkazets*, defined by Lermontov. This term signifies a Russian soldier who adopted a Caucasian way of life after having been in the Caucasus for an extended period, while the *abrek* constitutes an anti-colonial rebel, who functions to aestheticize violence. As we shall see, there are plenty of arguments to be made that the reading of Pechorin as a superfluous man deeply affected by events in Central Russia, is at best insufficient. He is just as profoundly affected by events in the Caucasus where he exhibits all the qualities of an invading coloniser, while simultaneously endeavouring to imitate the peoples he is colonising.

[126] See Valeria Sobol, "The Uncanny Frontier…" pp. 65-79
[127] See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*
[128] See Rebecca Gould, *Writers and Rebels: The Literature of Insurgency in the Caucasus* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 6-7, 40

Interpreting Pechorin: The Superfluous Coloniser

Pechorin is usually interpreted with reference to events and conditions in Central Russia. This is where Pechorin received his education and spent most of his life before going to the Caucasus to contribute to Russia's efforts to colonise the region. Seeley, for instance, interprets Pechorin in light of dandyism, cruelty, and fatalism,[129] but sees all of these traits only in connection with Pechorin's relation to other Russians, namely, his relations with people at the spa in Piatigorsk. Vladimir Porus, similarly, examines Pechorin's split personality and his repeated attempts to defeat fate, but hardly mentions the setting in which Pechorin's personality begins to split, or under which circumstances he tempts fate.[130]

Patterson analyses the superfluous man in terms of 'monological discourse,' which Patterson argues yields no results given that he remains in conversation with himself only.[131] However, the scholar also notes how Pechorin is affected by the words of others:

> Related to the superfluous man's fixation on the other's perception of him is his mimicry of the other's word. This too makes his discourse spoken rather than speaking, a discourse of echo and imitation. Pechorin, for instance, declares that "the world has warped" his soul, and in a remark to Princess Mary he explains why: "Everyone has seen in my face signs of evil characteristics that were not there; but they were expected to be there, so they were born." Although this statement is part of Pechorin's manipulation of Princess Mary, it also contains a revealing element: Pechorin is incapable of being anything except what others make of him, either in a positive or in a negative sense; even in his rebellion, he remains in the power of the social code and is determined by it.[132]

While Patterson's assessment that Pechorin behaves in the way that people expect of him, like Seeley and Porus, the scholar sees this tendency only in Pechorin's relation to other Russians at the spa in Piatigorsk, and does not acknowledge that Pechorin at numerous times is likened with the Caucasian populations, which is another expression of Pechorin reacting to the social climate he is in. Given Pechorin's role as a coloniser, he is expected to regard Caucasian peoples as inferior to Russians which inevitably will result in him subordinating others to his will.

The special feature in Pechorin's character is that he regards both indigenous peoples and Russians as inferior, but when he is interpreted in the light of colonialism, his superfluous and evil

[129] Seeley, "The Heyday…" pp. 105-106
[130] See Porus: "A Superfluous Man," pp. 113-128
[131] Patterson, "The Loss of the Word…" p. 6
[132] Patterson, "The Loss of the Word…" p. 12

characteristics are put to the background. In other words, there exists no satisfying analysis of Pechorin which acknowledges how his colonialist characteristics affect his superfluous nature, and *vice versa*. For instance, Layton, in the study of *Russian Literature and Empire*, sees Pechorin solely through the lens of imperialism and argues that Pechorin is "going native," but fails to connect that with his superfluous characteristics.[133] Similarly, Katya Hokanson acknowledges that Pechorin is a coloniser, but in showcasing his abominable behaviour toward the Caucasian peoples, particularly Bela, Hokanson never connects Pechorin's colonising actions to his treatment of people at the spa. Admittedly, Hokanson does portray Maxim Maximych as a hybrid, which indicates the merge of central and peripheral characteristics in a Russian character, but such an assessment is not made regarding Pechorin.[134] In sum, Pechorin is viewed by some as oppressed at home, and by others as an oppressor abroad. I argue that he is both.

The tone of academic interpretations of Pechorin may have been set already in contemporary reviews of Lermontov's work, which generally characterised Pechorin through a centralist ideology. As we have seen, Stepan Shevyrev thought very negatively of him, arguing that given his Western education he emerged as an expression of 'the main root of all evil.' In fact, Shevyrev argues that Pechorin was the greatest weakness of Lermontov's work:

> Here is a significant shortcoming of the work ... With the same sincerity with which we at first welcomed the author's splendid talent in the creation of many integral characters, in descriptions, in the gift of a story, with the same sincerity we condemn the main idea of the work, personified by the character of the hero. And the magnificent landscape of the Caucasus, the marvellous sketches of mountain life, the graciously naïve Bela, the artificial Princess, the fantastic rascal of Taman, the glorious, kind Maxim Maximovich [*sic.*], even the shallow little Grushnitsky, and all the subtle features of Russian high society – everything, everything in these stories is chained to the spectre of the main character, who does not spring [*istekaet*] from this life, everything is sacrificed to him, and this is the main and essential shortcoming of the representation.[135]

In short, all the things that could have made the work great, in Shevyrev's opinion, are ruined by the novel's protagonist. According to Shevyrev, Pechorin is simply not a believable character, that is, he seems to have been taken out of thin air, rather than out of reality in Shevyrev's view. Ironically, to the Westernist thinker, Vissarion Belinskii, *A Hero of Our Time* is a reproduction of reality. Although

[133] See Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire…* pp. 213-219
[134] See, Hokanson, *Writing at…* pp. 170-197 (particularly, p. 178)
[135] Stepan Shevyrev, "*Geroi nashego vremeni*"

Belinskii agrees that Pechorin has evil traits, the critic is more concerned with the deeper elements of Pechorin's psyche.

> [Pechorin] speaks loudly about his sins but does not pride himself on them; he reveals his bloody wounds and does not hide them under beggarly rags of pretence. He understood that the awareness of his sinfulness is the first step to salvation. He knows that true suffering is better than imaginary joy. For him, benefit and morality are only in one truth, but truth is in existence, that is, in that which is. Therefore, the art of our century is also a reproduction of rational reality. The task of our art is not to represent events in a story, novel, or drama in conformity with a predetermined objective, but to unfold them in conformity with the laws of reasonable necessity. And in this case, whatever the content of the poetic work, its impression on the soul of the reader will be beneficial, and, therefore, the moral goal will be achieved by itself.[136]

Contrary to Shevyrev, Belinskii praises Lermontov's creation of Pechorin, and even seems to sympathise with him, and acknowledges him as a realistic character taken out of reality. While Shevyrev argues that Pechorin is a ghost of the West who has no equivalent in the world of lived experiences, Belinskii argues that Pechorin is a realistic character with a deep philosophical mind which leads to an innate sadness. While Shevyrev and Belinskii disagree about the character of Pechorin, their sentiments are an expression of the attitude toward colonisation in contemporary Russia, where the subjugation of Russians is prioritised over the suppression of indigenous peoples. Unfortunately, this seems to have influenced some later academic interpretations of Pechorin, where his status as a coloniser is either ignored or left in the background.

Shevyrev and Belinskii's reviews, however, are illustrative of the cultural climate, in which Russian identity was heavily debated, expressed in the opposing groups called the Slavophiles (*slavianofily*) and the Westernisers (*zapadniki*). Following the eighteenth-century efforts to modernise Russian state institutions and the higher strata of society, Russia was left in an identity crisis when official policy conclusively turned its back on Europe after the failed Decembrist Revolt in 1825. The Slavophile turn in Russian politics had been anticipated since the French Revolution in 1789 and the Napoleonic Wars which ended in 1814 with Russian victory. As nationalism rose in Russia, and in Europe, in the first half of the nineteenth century, Russia was looking for signs and symbols from the past to define itself with, but faced a problem, given that many élite Russians had been brought under the influence of almost a century of Europeanising policies. Many at the Russian court spoke better French than they did Russian and were completely out of touch with the rest of

[136] Vissarion Belinskii, "*Geroi nashego vremeni sochinenie M. Lermontova*" in *Sobranie Sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow: *Khudozhestvennaia literatura*, 1948), p. 597

Russian society. The nation faced a problem of self-definition, and many began looking to the Russian peasants untouched by Europeanisation (see Chapter I) for sources of true Russianness. Furthermore, the interest in Russian history increased and many realised that "[t]he eighteenth-century belief that modern Russia had its source exclusively in the reign of Peter I was no longer tenable," as Marc Raeff argues.[137]

What is also indicative of the times, which is evident in the Shevyrev and Belinskii's reviews, is that while they argued that Pechorin was conclusively evil, they both praised the secondary character, Maxim Maximych. He is the catalyst for the development of the narrative in *A Hero of Our Time*: he meets the principal narrator by coincidence, to whom he tells the story of Pechorin's erotic conquest of Bela in the novel's first chapter, at the end of which he leaves Pechorin's diary to the principal narrator. Shevyrev argues that Maxim Maximych is "a native Russian good-natured person, who was not penetrated by the subtle infection of Western education,"[138] while Belinskii similarly characterises him as "a purely Russian type."[139] Ironically, given the assessment of him by Shevyrev and Belinskii, the first time the reader meets Maxim Maximych, he is smoking a Kabardian pipe while on a carriage dragged by bulls in the Koishaur Valley. He is immediately established by the narrator as someone who has spent a significant amount of time in the Caucasus and has taken on some indigenous customs and even their dress. He emerges as a *kavkazets*, that is, a type who, according to Lermontov was common among Russian officers stationed in the Caucasus, who out of fascination adopt and appropriate Caucasian cultural products and customs. These were traits that, as we shall see, Pechorin also exhibited. But whereas Shevyrev pointed to his lack of Western education, Belinskii revealingly points to Maxim Maximych's attitudes towards the peoples of the Caucasus in his characterisation of him as a Russian type. "For him, 'living' means 'serving,'" Belinskii writes, "and serving in the Caucasus; 'Asians' are his natural enemies."[140] It is difficult to not notice the contradiction that Maxim Maximych assimilating to Caucasian culture while simultaneously considering the Caucasian peoples as enemies.

Nonetheless, the celebration of Maxim Maximych points to an ambiguity in Russian identity, which may have been affected by the Slavophile turn in Russian politics. The cultural appropriation by Maxim Maximych is a reversal of Peter I's Europeanisation reforms. Where the Emperor sought inspiration from the West to modernise the state institutions and higher strata of society, Maxim

---

[137] Marc Raeff, "At the Origins of a Russian National Consciousness: Eighteenth Century Roots and the Napoleonic Wars," *The History Teacher*, vol. 25, no. 1 (Nov. 1991), p. 12

[138] Shevyrev, "*Geroi nashego vremeni,*"

[139] Belinskii, "*Geroi nashego vremeni…*" p. 563

[140] Belinskii, "*Geroi nashego vremeni…*" p. 563

Maximych was praised for turning his back on Western ideals, much like the official policy at the time. Instead, he turned his attention toward the originary culture of peoples that were fighting for their right to self-definition at the face of a colonial power which he himself was representing. While Pechorin is also guilty of this cultural appropriation, he is not praised for it by critics, which may be due to his inability to adapt to the cultural values of the Russian *beau monde*, which is seen in his dealings with Grushnitskii and Princess Mary.

Maxim Maximych does not question the arbitrariness of his position, or the epaulettes he decorates his uniform with, which, as we shall see, Pechorin does. Maxim Maximych does not have a sense of self-superiority or a need to subjugate others to his power (unless they are identified by Russians as *inorodtsy*), Pechorin does. In other words, it is Pechorin's critical nature toward the arbitrary rules of society and especially rank, which ultimately makes him unable to adapt and fulfil his duties. It is clear from the interpretations presented here (in both academic and contemporary critical writing) that Pechorin's evil traits are presumed to stem from the cultural climate in Central Russia. In order to determine the origin of Pechorin's evil traits and how they unfold in the Caucasus, I will in the following two sections first determine the influence of Decembrism on Pechorin's character, which results in superfluity, before going into how Pechorin acts as a coloniser and develops into an 'inverted hybrid.'

The Centrality of All Evil: Pechorin as a Superfluous Decembrist

Along with the emancipation of all the serfs, the group who would later be called the Decembrists, demanded the end of autocracy and the introduction of a constitution. Their discontent culminated in the so-called Decembrist revolt of 1825.[141] Intellectuals and artists attacked the Winter Palace as the Tsar, Alexandr I, had died and there was a brief moment of fragility in Russian imperial rule. However, the attack was poorly planned and poorly executed and was swiftly destroyed. When Nicholas I ascended the throne, the action taken against the insurrectionists was brutal. Nicholas punished most of them by deporting them to Siberia, and ensued a despotic reign where censorship was strengthened, while the possibility for significant political change was curtailed definitively. The response to the attack on the Winter Palace is perhaps the clearest movement away from the liberal ideas of freedom of speech and democracy, which were gaining ground in Europe in these years.

The Decembrists were a group of revolutionaries who first and foremost were artists and intellectuals. They advocated for freedom of speech and publication as well as a constitution, which

[141] Decembrist is from the Russia *dekabr*, meaning December. The revolt took place in December, hence their name.

could be a forerunner for democracy. Poor planning and poor execution meant that their rebellion ended in disaster, and many were sent to labour camps in Siberia on long sentences. However, they were also an expression of a counterculture, which confronted the ideals of Russian high society. As Iurii Lotman assesses, "[t]he Decembrists were members of the nobility in addition to being revolutionaries," rejecting class distinctions, but continually tied to them. They treasured cultural value higher than practical. They "cultivated seriousness" in every aspect of existence and disliked word play. They viewed all action, even literary, as signifying, meaning that their "rejection of the love elegy as a poetic genre could be taken as a call for rejecting love in real life." They saw "social entertainment (…) as signs of spiritual emptiness," and attempted to instil a level of seriousness into social events by attending balls but refusing to dance at them. In this way they showed "contempt for the common pastimes of the nobility."[142] William Mills Todd III similarly argues that…

> …sacrificing the company of women for serious study, or refusing to play cards and dance at balls were some of the ways in which the Decembrists chose to challenge the status quo and to make changes beyond those involving the gradual amelioration of manners.[143]

Such a description of the Decembrist character falls strikingly close to Pechorin's: he frequently goes to balls in high society circles, but prefers to stand back and watch. Even when he and Grushnitskii are competing for the hand of Princess Mary, Pechorin lets Grushnitskii dance with her, making himself a mysterious enigma, which entices the Princess.

The Decembrists were a contradictory group. They were part of the nobility, but simultaneously rejected its culture and way of life as Todd III points out:

> Yet the Decembrists in the capital needed the social conventions and ideology of polite society in order to mount challenges through this process of cultural estrangement (*ostranenie*). After all, they had to appear at balls in order not to dance at them, take cognizance of social fashions in order to oppose them…[144]

The Decembrists were themselves nobles, and often held high positions in military or civil service. Yet they criticised the lifestyle of the society that they mingled with and relied on for their income

[142] Iurii M. Lotman, "The Decembrist in Daily Life (Everyday Behaviour as a Historical-Psychological Category)," translated by Andrea Beesing in Alexander D. Nakhimovsky & Alice Stone Nakhimovsky (eds.), *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 98-99, 101, 102-103, 104-105, 135, 137, 138
[143] William Mills Todd III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin* (Cambridge, MA, & London: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 40
[144] Todd III, *Fiction and Society…* p. 40-41

and status. It was unheard of to give up one's position, yet they criticised the system of ranks within the nobility and did not care for epaulettes or medals to decorate their uniforms, although they wore them.

The critical nature of the Decembrists, particularly regarding the significance of epaulettes and medals, i.e. the symbols of military rank, is expressed by Pechorin numerous times. For instance, in a conversation with Pechorin, Grushnitskii admits his insecurity about his lack of epaulettes, to which Pechorin responds:

> "My dear fellow! You are far more interesting as you are. You simply do not know how to take advantage of your favourable position. Don't you know that a soldier's greatcoat makes you a hero and a martyr in the eyes of any sensitive young lady?"
> Grushnitsky smiled complacently.
> "What nonsense!" he said.[145]

Grushnitskii, who subscribes to the norms of Russian high society, is immune to Pechorin's stance on epaulettes, as he is convinced that what society has taught him is true: to make an impression on Princess Mary, the most desirable young lady of Piatigorsk, he needs epaulettes. However, when Grushnitskii finally gets his epaulettes, he announces his promotion to Werner, Pechorin's doctor and friend, but he refuses to congratulate him and repeats Pechorin's stance by stating that: "…the soldier's greatcoat suits you very well, and you will have to admit that an infantry officer's uniform tailored here at the spa will not add anything of interest to you… You see, so far you have been an exception, whereas now you will be quite commonplace."[146] Werner's statement is surprising, given that society was built on a system of ranks in which people had rights and status based on the uniform they wore and the epaulettes it was decorated with. Werner is of German origin, and perhaps this is a choice made by the author to highlight that Pechorin's stance is reminiscent of value systems from Western Europe. Nonetheless, what Werner points out is that many in society had realised the arbitrariness of the ranking system, and that it was illogical that some could claim superiority over others based on the type of uniform they wore. This observation is even more significant given that this system not only applied within the military, but also in social life.

When the Princess later rejects Grushnitskii, his obsession with epaulettes and uniforms comes back to haunt him: "Oh, I have been bitterly mistaken! I thought, fool that I am, that at least

---

[145] Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 80; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 90
[146] Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 97; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 109

these epaulettes would give me the right to hope… Yes, it would have been better to spend the rest of my life in that despicable soldier's greatcoat, to which I perhaps owed your attention."[147] Grushnitskii takes the Princess' rejection of him as an insult, but when he comes to Pechorin voicing his displeasure with the Princess, Pechorin replies: "Blame your greatcoat or your epaulettes, but why accuse her?"[148] – meaning that the blame should be put on Grushnitskii's obsession with ranks, not on the individual who does not care for ranks or uniforms. His promotion does not mean that the Princess finds him more interesting or suitable, as he had hoped. In fact, she found him more interesting before he gained his promotion, simply because he stood out. Werner, Pechorin and the Princess seem to have realised the arbitrariness of the ranking system and the absurdity of its strict rules of etiquette. Grushnitskii, however, conforms to the rules of social etiquette defined by society. None of the characters here give him the respect he believes he should receive, and after his failure to make an impression on the Princess, and the humiliation that followed, he starts plotting against Pechorin, whom he blames for his failure to impress the Princess. Eventually Grushnitskii challenges Pechorin to a duel which proves fatal for Grushnitskii.

From these passages, one could read Grushnitskii as the representation of the traditional values of high society in which rank and uniforms determined social rules. These values clash with the critical and questioning nature of Pechorin. It could be read as the victory of Western ideals over Russian values, which could explain Shevyrev's hatred for the character of Pechorin. Naturally, however, it must be pointed out that Pechorin by no means is represented as a positive character, and that Lermontov's creation of him in no way should be read as an approval of him and his ways. While Grushnitskii did initiate the duel by challenging Pechorin, it was Pechorin's actions that drove Grushnitskii to plot against him.

Pechorin repeatedly humiliates Grushnitskii in his desire for a sense of superiority over the people surrounding him, which can also be seen in his conduct toward the Caucasian populations, as we shall see. Picking Grushnitskii for this deed is not arbitrary, since he represents conformity to the social rules that Pechorin loathes. In this sense, Pechorin's continued deliberate humiliation of Grushnitskii, and the eventual murder of him, is a rebellion against Russian noblemen's obsession with rank. However, its literary representation is as such not a deconstruction of the system. Pechorin, whose actions can be read as attempts to expose the incongruous power relations between people of high society, does not manage to change anything – either for himself, or for society. Although

[147] Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 103; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 115
[148] Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 104; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 116

Pechorin's rebellion is successful in the sense that he manages to humiliate Grushnitskii, it does not change Pechorin's fortune – a defining trait of the superfluous men. He is himself of rank, but must serve the army, so after the duel he is called up again and sent to the front, confirming that he too remains superfluous.

The idea of Pechorin as a superfluous man is by no means a new thought. In fact, he remains one of the most famous superfluous types of Russian literature. While Seeley labels Pechorin a rebel without a cause,[149] Chances sees him as an expression of non-conformity highlighted by the conformity of the characters that surround him, such as Grushnitskii, but especially Maxim Maximych. Pechorin does clearly possess a rebellious nature, which perhaps is the cause of his alienation from society, and an expression of his non-conformity.[150] The non-conformity and rebelliousness of Pechorin results in his alienation from society, which stems from his heightened sense of reflexivity about himself and society. Chances further points to both his overly sensitive consciousness and demonic qualities to explain Pechorin's isolation from society.[151] More recent scholarship sees Pechorin as "an embodiment of the psychological effects of the contemporary circumstances in Russia,"[152] or as a character whose consciousness is split in two,[153] a thought that we shall return to later. Nil Korkut Nayki in turn explains Pechorin's alienation from and hostility to society through intellectual superiority: "He thinks too much and questions too much, which eventually lead to a sense of dissatisfaction with everything and everybody around him, including himself."[154] What these characterisations of Pechorin, have in common is that that none of them in any way are concerned with Pechorin's status as a coloniser, which we have already seen is typical of most academic interpretations of Pechorin. Scholars tend not to see Pechorin's desire to subordinate others to his will as an expression of his colonising self. Instead, they focus on his relation to other Russians at the spa in Piatigorsk.

The non-conformity of the superfluous man and his alienation from society stems from his inability, or unwillingness, to accept the social codes of high society, much like the Decembrists. As Chances writes:

---

[149] Seeley, "The Heyday…" p. 105
[150] Judith M. Armstrong argues similarly that Pechorin is superfluous because of his alienation from his own class of society. See Armstrong, "The True Origins of the Superfluous Man," *Russian Literature*, vol. 17 (1985), p. 294
[151] Chances, *Conformity's Children*, pp. 40-46
[152] Victoria Bilge Yilmaz & Hatira Kamalova: "A Superfluous Man: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*, and Conrad's *The Shadow-Line*," *AGATHOS*, vol. 10, No. 1 (2019), p. 125
[153] See: Porus: "A Superfluous Man," pp. 113-128
[154] Nil Korkut Nayki, "Anticipating the Existentialist Hero in Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* and Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*," *Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 16, No. 1 (2017), p. 186

> Sometimes the nonconformist can be seen as a noble, tragic figure, but sometimes he or she can be seen as being explicitly or implicitly condemned. The authorial disapproval of nonconformist behaviour, or an ambivalent attitude toward nonconformity, marks the life and art of diverse cultures."[155]

While it is true that the superfluous men are generally represented negatively, and characters who succeed in Russian nineteenth-century novels are the ones who conform, Lermontov's portrayal does not conclusively offer "a negative attitude toward Pechorin,"[156] as Chances argues. The portrayal of Pechorin is ambiguous: by letting Pechorin narrate most of his own story, the negative representation stems from the reader's condemnation of his actions, rather than the authorial representation. Pechorin does commit despicable acts, but there is no conclusive condemnation presented to the reader by a third person narrator. Instead, what Pechorin leaves the reader with are implicit attestations of guilt and heavy conscience as when Pechorin leaves the sight of the duel where he has just killed Grushnitskii.

> Untying my horse, I set out for home at walking pace. My heart was empty within me [byl kamen']. The sun seemed to have lost its brilliance [kazalos' mne tusklo] and its rays did not warm me.
>
> Before reaching the settlement I turned into a gorge on my right. I could not have endured the sight of anyone just then; I wanted to be alone. With the reins hanging loose and my head sunk in my breast, I rode on for some time, until I found myself in an entirely unfamiliar spot. I turned back and sought the roadway. The sun was setting when I reached Kislovodsk, a spent man on a spent horse.[157]

Pechorin does not condemn his own actions but instead shows his readers that he possesses a guilty conscience and that he feels remorse about the crime he has committed. His physical fatigue, when reaching Kislovodsk becomes a metaphor for his mental exhaustion. His description of the sun as appearing dull to him ("*kazalos' mne tusklo*"), stands in stark contrast to his outburst of delight just after his initial arrival in Piatigorsk: "It is a joy to live in a place like this! A feeling of elation flows in all my veins. The air is pure and fresh like the kiss of a child, the sun is bright and the sky blue – what more could one desire?"[158] In this way, Lermontov shows how Pechorin's spirit has changed over the course of his stay in Piatigorsk. The sun was shining brightly when he first arrived, but his perception of the sun has changed dramatically as his psyche is marred by the murder of Grushnitskii.

---

[155] Chances, "The Superfluous Man in Russian Literature" in Neil Cornwell (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 111
[156] Chances, "The Superfluous Man…" p. 114
[157] Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 129; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 143
[158] Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 67; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 76

He does not quite turn into the bed-ridden feverish Raskol'nikov, but there is an indication of the psychological realism that Fedor Dostoevskii later became famous for. The contrast between Raskol'nikov and Pechorin is striking since Raskol'nikov, who has also committed murder although in different circumstances, receives his punishment and then gains redemption. For Pechorin it is not so: he receives no other punishment than the fact that he must live with himself afterwards, and he is offered no redemption whatsoever.

When the principal narrator meets Pechorin for the first time, he attests of him that his eyes "did not laugh when he did. Have you ever had occasion to observe this peculiarity in some people? It is a sign either of evil nature or of deep constant sadness."[159] It is in these instances where the questions of the representation of Pechorin as conclusively evil emerges. Is he evil due to an innate sadness, or is he sad because of his evil traits? Either way, these admissions of a guilty conscience, invoke sympathy in his readers. Pechorin admits that he hates himself,[160] but his admissions of self-loathing rather invoke sympathy toward him on part of the reader, like his assessment of the sun appearing dull to him. Simultaneously, however, one is left with the thought of what Pechorin's intentions were with these admissions. Is he deliberately invoking sympathy in his readers? Or is writing the diary his way of dealing with his conscience and justifying his actions?

In literary criticism and academic writing there has been much speculation about what created Pechorin, although most answers seem to revolve around issues in Central Russia, rather than issues related to Russian colonialism. As we saw, Shevyrev believes that Pechorin is born from his Western-minded upbringing and education, while Belinskii believes high society is to blame. Pechorin himself also points his finger at society:

> Yes, such has been my lot since childhood. Everyone read signs of non-existent evil traits in my features. But since they were expected to be there, they did make their appearance. Because I was reserved, they said I was sly, so I grew reticent. I was keenly aware of good and evil, but instead of being indulged I was insulted and so I became spiteful. I was sulky while other children were merry and talkative, but though I felt superior to them I was considered inferior. So I grew envious. I was ready to love the whole world, but no one understood me, and I learnt to hate. My cheerless youth passed in conflict with myself and society, and, fearing ridicule, I buried my finest feelings deep in my heart, and there they died. I spoke the truth, but nobody believed me, so I began to practise duplicity [obmanyvat']. Having come to know society and its mainsprings, I became versed [iskusen] in the art [nauke] of living and saw how others were happy without that proficiency, enjoying gratuitously the

[159] Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 45; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 59

[160] "Sometimes I despise myself; is that why I despise others too?" Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 113; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 126

> boons I had so painfully [neutomimo] striven for. It was then that despair was born in my breast – not the despair that is cured with a pistol, but a cold, impotent desperation, concealed under a polite exterior and a good-natured smile. I became a moral cripple; I had lost one half of my soul for it had shrivelled, dried up and died, and I had cut it off and cast it away, while the other half stirred and lived, adapted to serve every comer. No one noticed this, because no one suspected there had been another half; now, however, you have awakened memories of it in me, and what I have just done is to read its epitaph to you.[161]

Society has, according to Pechorin himself, split his personality. Had it not been for society he would not have turned evil. His 'good side' was killed by a society that expected him to be evil. So, he became evil. Pechorin confesses this to the Princess while on a stroll, which makes one wonder if he merely told her this story to stir compassion in her, to make her feel sorry for him, much like he may have done to his readers. But perhaps there is more truth to this than Pechorin realises. As he already had the potential for evil just by being human (evil is a human trait), being rejected by society made him lash out against it and his evil traits materialised. In such actions he found his love of feeling superior to others and chose to chase this. When humiliating Grushnitskii and putting the Princess under his spell it is this feeling that he chases.

His personality is thus split between good and evil: On his way to the duel with Grushnitskii, Pechorin confesses to Werner that: "There are two men in me; one lives in the full sense of the word, the other reasons and passes judgement on the first. The first will perhaps take leave of you and the world for ever in an hour now, and the second… the second?"[162] Pechorin's split personality thus materialises in one side that is outwardly expressive and the other passes inward judgement on his actions. It is his active personality that kills Grushnitskii, and it is his inactive conscience that passes judgment on himself when he is riding toward Kislovodsk afterwards. That is, Pechorin knows what he has done is morally and ethically wrong, but the side of him that realises this never materialises in any type of action – it only passes judgement. Thus, the active and inactive personalities could be divided into good and evil. Although it is clear that his evil (outwardly expressive) side has defeated his (inactive) good side, it is his outwardly expressive side which influences his characteristics as a coloniser. What is unclear in this connection is what his inactive judgmental side thinks of this. It is in Pechorin's inactive side that, according to himself, condemnation is found, but his guilty conscience is only seen in relation to wrongdoings he committed against the Russians in Piatigorsk, ignoring the wrongdoings he commits against Bela.

---

[161] Lermontov, *A Hero…* pp. 98-99; Lermontov, *Geroi…* pp. 110-111
[162] Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 123; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 136

According to Porus, Pechorin's duel with Grushnitskii is to be read as an attempt to tempt "fate by *trying* to play with it."[163] Porus argues that Pechorin leaves himself to the fate of Grushnitskii's bullet, and that his own shot in this logic is also an expression of fate. Since Grushnitskii's shot misses, Pechorin can argue to himself that he is blameless, since it was fate and not his actions that killed Grushnitskii. Many of Pechorin's actions can be read in this way, not least the ones in the final chapter, "The Fatalist," in which Pechorin is seen playing Russian roulette. In a wider sense, it can be read in accordance with Pechorin's desire for superiority, not just over people, but also over fate. His actions are still controlled by the desire for superiority: he rebels against society to prove that he is superior to it. Even though he is successful, in the sense that he kills the embodiment of the social rules and etiquette he fights against, he becomes remorseful and realises that his actions change nothing for the better.

As such my argument has now run in a circle. I began by presenting how the Decembrists behaved in high society, which was similar to some of Pechorin's actions and opinions on ranks and uniforms. Then I identified that these ideas might stem from Pechorin's desire for superiority, which highlighted his alienation from society, i.e. his superfluity, before I discussed his inner deep sadness and his fatalist nature. The various articles I have cited on the way here, are an expression of the attention paid to Pechorin's character in academia as well as in critical literature. However, what is striking is that none of them go into any issues related to colonialism or his status as a coloniser. Granted, there exists academic literature that uses postcolonial theory in readings of Lermontov's work, but none of them find that Pechorin's sense of self-superiority is an expression of both his alienation from society and his nature as a coloniser.

Pechorin's sense of self-superiority should be related to Russia's conquest of the Caucasus. Pechorin's rebellion against the *beau monde* is a rebellion against policies of petty self-colonisation, here exemplified by the Table of Ranks and the rules of etiquette that followed. It is a rebellion against the Russian authorities' constant attempts to mould the identity of the Russian nobility. However, the most striking quality of Pechorin's character are his acts of self-othering; instances where he dresses up inspired by a culture that is not his own, or when he acts irrationally and violently with fatal consequences. While he speaks for individual freedom, he is only concerned about his own freedom, not the freedom of others – Russians or Caucasians. He does not care much for the rights of the peoples caught by the Russian imperialist machine devouring everything in its path, but he strives to be one such machine, as we shall see.

[163] Vladimir Porus, "A Superfluous Man," p. 117 [Original emphasis]

Exposing the Ambiguity of the Russian Coloniser: Pechorin as an 'Inverted Hybrid'

Pechorin and many other characters in Russian Caucasus tales were bored by the trivialities of the Russian *beau monde* and went to the Caucasus for some adventure and excitement. In Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century, so-called arm-chair travelling was popular amongst the Russian reading public. Since Russia did not have a free press, and therefore lacked a journalistic tradition, the Russian public knew very little about Russia's conquest of the Caucasus. This meant that many read Pushkin, Lermontov, Alexandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii and other poets for information. Publications of literature from the Caucasus were often equipped with footnotes explaining various phenomena and phrases, which satisfied the reading public's desire for information. Additionally, given the Empire's restrictive policies on travelling, many Russians, including Pushkin himself, suffered from wanderlust, which they could satisfy by reading works of literature.[164] Boredom with the prosaic lifestyle of Russian high society and the wanderlust this created, also became a theme in literature from the Caucasus, and is evident in works such as Pushkin's *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (*Kavkazskii plennik*, 1822), Tolstoi's *The Cossacks* (*Kazaki*, 1863), and crucially, in *A Hero of Our Time*. Pechorin presumably wanted to go to the Caucasus for a change of scenery and some excitement, but is utterly bored when he once again finds himself amongst the *beau monde* which he loathes so much. Pechorin is a soldier, but we never see him in battle, and each time he is on leave, in the chapters "Bela" and "Princess Mary," he stirs up drama for his own amusement in the pursuit of a sense of self-superiority. As was quoted in the Introduction to this dissertation and read as an allegory to the Russian Empire, Pechorin writes in his journal:

> I sense in myself that insatiable avidity that devours everything in its path, and I regard sufferings and joys of others merely in relation to myself, as food to sustain my spiritual strength. Passion is no longer capable of robbing me of my sanity; my ambition has been crushed by circumstances, but it has manifested itself in a new form, for ambition is nothing but lust for power, and my greatest pleasure I derive from subordinating everything around me to my will.[165]

This element of Pechorin's character is especially evident in the aforementioned chapters, which tend to be analysed as two separate stories by scholars, but here shall be read in conjunction. The chapter "Princess Mary" sees Pechorin's arrival at the vacation retreat of Piatigorsk in Northern Caucasus where members of Russian high society and soldiers on leave from the front mingle. The Princess is

---

[164] Layton, Russian Literature and Empire… p. 24

[165] Lermontov, *A Hero*… p. 96; Lermontov, *Geroi*… p. 107

from a Russian aristocratic family, who is looking for a suitable husband for her. The setting represents what Pechorin, and other characters in Russian Caucasus literature wanted to get away from, and this becomes evident in Pechorin's diary as well, where he articulates his boredom. Even Grushnitskii, who conforms to the rules of social etiquette amongst the *beau monde*, admits that he is bored with it:

> We lead a rather prosaic life. (…) Those who drink the waters in the mornings are listless like all invalids, and those who drink wine in the evenings are unbearable like all people who enjoy good health. There is feminine company, but it offers little consolation; they play whist, dress badly and speak terrible French.[166]

However, this is where the similarities between Grushnitskii and Pechorin end. Where Grushnitskii finds his pleasure in rising in rank and receiving epaulettes to decorate his uniform, Pechorin finds his pleasure in subordinating others to his will. This could be interpreted as an expression of Pechorin's boredom, but I will suggest over the coming pages that this element of his character is rather an expression of his attitudes toward himself in relation to others. That is, these are typical traits of a coloniser, who has convinced himself that his way of life is superior to other lifestyles, and therefore people should adapt to his principles. Pechorin's actions against Grushnitskii in "Princess Mary" described earlier, should be interpreted this way.

Pechorin's relation to women is indicative of his pursuit of self-superiority: he uses women mainly for the purpose of subordinating them to his will, as in the case of Princess Mary and Bela. What these instances have in common is that they result in disaster for the women that Pechorin puts his claws in. The case of Bela, a sexual adventure with a younger Circassian woman, is a classic in Russian Orientalist literature about the Caucasus. In Pushkin's narrative poem, *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*, for instance, the prisoner is freed by the woman attending to him after having successfully manoeuvred a romantic relationship with her, after which he abandons her. Such erotic conquests can be read as allegories to the Empire's struggles to colonise the Caucasus region. As Shkandrij argues:

> [Lermontov's] stories of seduction, rape, kidnapping, love, rejection, and separation along the borders of imperial expansion (…) as in the stories 'Taman' and 'Bela' (…) can be read as eroticizations of violence and allegories of an imperial-colonial relationship that ends in every instance with violence and destruction.[167]

---

[166] Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 70; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 79
[167] Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine…* p. 45

Pechorin's attempted conquest of Bela is one such adventure. Pechorin strikes a deal with her brother, Azamat and agrees that he will steal a horse for him if he can marry Bela. Pechorin carries out the deed, but the owner of the horse, Kazbich, kidnaps Bela in a vengeful act. Pechorin chases Bela and Kazbich on horseback, shoots his pistol at them hitting the leg of their horse, causing it to crash. When Kazbich sees Pechorin getting closer he stabs Bela, who later dies from her wound. This sequence can be seen as an allegory to the Russian conquest of the Caucasus since in the 1830s and 40s the endeavour to colonise the region was still ongoing, and Russian troops were suffering heavy losses. By having Pechorin attempting to manoeuvre the marriage to a Circassian girl, whom he believes he has a right to take and fighting those same people to keep her as his possession, Lermontov shows the hopelessness in the colonisation of the Caucasus and its people, which had been ongoing for centuries.

Pechorin's actions are sufficient evidence that we can call Pechorin a coloniser. However, over the course of the novel's chronology[168] the representation of Pechorin develops in a way which makes Pechorin appear similar to the colonised peoples of the Caucasus. As Susan Layton writes: "The violent denouement of 'Bela' most overtly underscores the hero's interchangeability with [the local population]."[169] While he in "Princess Mary" uses cultural appropriation to further his cause in the humiliation of Grushnitskii and courtship of the Princess, for instance by dressing as a Circassian and hiding behind bushes to scare the Princess and Grushnitskii;[170] in "Bela" it is almost as if Pechorin is becoming Chechen. Naturally, this is all performance on Pechorin's part: he performs his otherness through assimilating to local culture to get what he wants: humiliating Grushnitskii and marrying Bela. In Layton's assessment, he is "going 'native,'"[171] which is evident, for instance, when Bela is kidnapped by Kazbich, and Pechorin is in pursuit of them, Maxim Maximych describes how he "yelled out not a bit worse than any Chechen."[172] This underscores Pechorin's interchangeability with the local population, as attested by Layton, and it furthermore highlights his binary character as both 'self' and 'other,' while also being an example of racist discourse directed at the Caucasian population.

A "degeneration into savagery,"[173] Layton claims, occurs in Pechorin's character as he moves further into the Caucasus. However, probably his most violent act of savagery occurs outside of

---

[168] Which falls as "Taman," then "Princess Mary," "The Fatalist," and "Bela."
[169] Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire…* p. 218
[170] Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 86; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 96
[171] See Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire…* pp. 213-19
[172] Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 34; *Geroi…* p. 49
[173] Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire…* p. 217

Piatigorsk in the duel with Grushnitskii. In Piatigorsk, he is for the most part a dandy attending balls, and roaming in the circles of the *beau monde*, which is perhaps the most 'civilised' side of him. However, the cold-blooded murder of Grushnitskii is anything but civilised. That being said, in "Bela," he acts more irrationally than he does in "Princess Mary," and perhaps this is what Layton refers to when she points to a "degeneration into savagery." Throughout the novel Pechorin shows a remarkable ability to conform without truly conforming. He knows the social rules of any setting he is in – whether it is among the *beau monde* or among indigenous Caucasians. However, whereas he despises the *beau monde* he seems fascinated by the customs of the Caucasian population. In "Princess Mary" he attests:

> …I have been told that, mounted and wearing Circassian costume, I look more like a Kabardian than many Kabardians. And indeed, as far as the noble battle garb is concerned, I am a perfect dandy: not an extra bit of braiding, costly weapons with the simplest finish, the fur on my cap neither too long nor too short, leggings and soft-leather boots fitting perfectly, white *beshmet* and dark-brown Circassian coat. I practiced long the mountain people's way of mounting a horse, and nothing so flatters my vanity as praise for my ability to ride a horse as the Caucasians do.[174]

For Pechorin looking like a Caucasian is not enough. He wants to act as they do, ride a horse like they do. He is becoming more and more of a *kavkazets*, a concept defined by Lermontov in a text about Russian soldiers in the Caucasus, written in 1841, although not published until 1928. The term *kavkazets* refers to soldiers who, in their passion for Caucasian culture, take up customs, dresses and behaves like the Caucasian peoples. Using a judgmental tone, Lermontov writes of their development:

> …recently [the *kavkazets*] made friends with a peaceful Circassian, began to visit him in the *aul*. He fell in love with the simple and savage life, devoid of the refinements of secular and urban life; he developed a passion for the poetic traditions of a bellicose people, who do not know the history of Russia and European politics. He fully understood the ways and customs of the mountaineers, became familiar with the names of their heroes [bogatyryei], memorised the genealogies of the most important families. He knows which prince is trustworthy and who is a cheat. He knows who is friends with whom and between who there is blood. He speaks a little Tatar; he has (…) a genuine *gurda* [an antique Caucasian sabre], a dagger - an old *basalai* (…), an excellent Crimean rifle that he polishes [smazyvaet] himself, a horse - a pure *shallokh* (…). His passion for everything

[174] Lermontov, *A Hero…* p. 84-85; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 95

> Circassian reaches improbability. He is ready to talk with a filthy *uzden'* all day long about a rotten horse and a rusty rifle, and he is very fond of letting others into the secrets of Asian customs.[175]

However, the *kavkazets* also seems oddly familiar when thinking of Said's assessment of an 'Oriental,' as Said writes: "'Oriental' identifies an amateur or professional enthusiasm for everything Asiatic, which was wonderfully synonymous with the exotic, the mysterious, the profound, the seminal."[176] The *kavkazets* is thus easily compared with the 'Oriental,' although the *kavkazets*' enthusiasm specifically refers to Caucasian customs and artefacts. While Pechorin does not teach others 'the secrets of Caucasian life,' as Lermontov writes of the *kavkazets*, he does seem to become gradually more suited to life in the Caucasus as the novel's chronology develops. "Taman," is the first chapter in the novel's chronological order, while "Bela" describes the latest events surrounding Pechorin, although it is the first chapter of the novel. But the interesting part of "Bela," in this case is how easily Pechorin moves around in the Caucasian landscape and how he successfully manoeuvres the marriage to Bela using his knowledge of Caucasian customs. Although, the *kavkazets* is not a concept typically attributed to Pechorin, but is rather applied to Maxim Maximych,[177] Pechorin does show clear signs of developing into such a character.

There is perhaps even a case to be made that Pechorin's interchangeability with the Caucasian populations can be stretched even further. In Gould's work on Caucasian anti-colonial literature, the figure of the *abrek* plays a significant role. This character also features in *A Hero of Our Time* in the form of Kazbich, from whom Pechorin steals a horse.[178] The *abrek* is according to Gould an "anticolonial bandit [who] violates coercively imposed legal norms in the process of fulfilling the mandate of a higher ethical order."[179] That is, the *abrek* opposes colonial law, and in doing so establishes an alternative legal code, not unlike Bhabha's third space, in which oppressed peoples turn colonial discourse against the colonisers.[180] Although the *abrek* is deeply connected to religion, and Pechorin seems to pay no attention to religious practises, there are still some important similarities between them. The *abrek*, Gould attests, functions in literature to aestheticize violence

---

[175] Lermontov, "*Kavkazets*," in Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Khudozhestvannaia literatura, 1984), p. 144
[176] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 51
[177] See for instance, Katya Hokanson, *Writing at…* p. 175
[178] Kazbich is referred to as *abrek*: "It was said of [Kazbich] that he would ride out beyond the Kuban with the bandits [*abreki*]." He also refers to himself as *abrek*: "Once, beyond the Terek it was, I rode with the bandits [*abreki*] to pick up some Russian horses." Azamat is also referred to as *abrek*: "So [Azamat] has been missing ever since; most likely he joined some *abrek* band and perhaps he ended his mad career beyond the Terek or maybe the Kuban." See Lermontov, pp. 14, 15, 20; Lermontov, *Geroi…* pp. 28, 29, 35
[179] Gould, *Writers and Rebels…* pp. 6-7
[180] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 53-56

through anti-colonial rebellion, while Pechorin uses violence to expose what he perceives as injustices in the strict rules of etiquette in the *beau monde*. Naturally, comparing these two types of rebellion seems rather illogical, especially given the pettiness of the injustice felt by Pechorin, when compared with the perils of colonised peoples. Nonetheless, both the *abrek* and Pechorin use violence in their endeavours. Furthermore, Gould notes that the *abrek* is an outcast, and mentions his "quixotic militancy,"[181] which resonates with the Russian figure of the superfluous man. That Pechorin is interchangeable with the local population to the extent of being an *abrek* is naturally a stretch, given that he never loses his privilege of being Russian. Nonetheless, the traits that he performs related to self-othering, can be compared to that of the *abrek*.

The comparisons between Pechorin and members of the indigenous populations in the Caucasus speak to a double-sidedness in Pechorin's character. This goes beyond the split psyche frequently diagnosed in scholarly discussions of Pechorin. Rather, we must view Pechorin as a character caught between two cultures, a predicament much like that described by Bhabha's theory of the hybrid. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that colonised subjects are 'hybrid' in the sense that they are affected by cultural standards inherent to colonial discourse and the culture of their originary heritage simultaneously. In so doing, Bhabha challenges the classic binary distinction between the coloniser and the colonised shaped by previous postcolonial scholars, such as Albert Memmi and Edward Said. As such, the hybrid emerges as both 'self' and 'other'. This makes Bhabha's theory particularly useful for the Russian colonial instance, where, as Etkind has argued, both colonised and coloniser were hybridised in the middle grounds that were left behind as Russia rapidly expanded.[182] The potential for hybridity in both colonised and coloniser also exists because of Russia's ambiguous relationship with the West. According to Layton, Russia could not conclusively call the Caucasus its 'other' because of its inability to join completely Western culture and points out that Russia had a long history of cultural exchange with Asian peoples.[183] The inability to inscribe completely itself as part of the Occident, makes Russia's relationship with the Occident and 'Orient' equally ambiguous.

The representation of Pechorin can be read as an expression of this ambiguous relation between East and West in the Russian middle-ground. He has received a Western education but is also able to adapt to the customs of every cultural setting he is in, whether that is among the native populations in the Caucasus, or among ethnic Russians. This characteristic, as we have seen, makes

[181] Gould, *Writers and Rebels*... p. 40
[182] Etkind, *Internal Colonization*... p. 64
[183] Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*… p. 74

it possible to interpret his character according to Bhabha's theory of the hybrid. However, Pechorin cannot be a hybrid in the pure Bhabhan sense, since using the term in such a way implies a colonial subjugation by a foreign power. Rather, he will emerge as an expression of hybridity attributed to the coloniser, but due to these characteristics, Pechorin must be labelled an 'inverted hybrid.' That is, a character who is affected by the culture of the peoples they have oppressed to such a degree, that they begin to dress and behave like them.

The development of Pechorin's 'inverted hybridity' begins in the first chapter of Pechorin's journal, "Taman," which is also chronologically the first chapter of the novel. It sees Pechorin arrive in the Black Sea coastal town of Taman overlooking Crimea, where he is to lodge in the house of an elderly deaf woman, where a blind boy and a young woman also reside. According to Shkandrij, "the Caucasus [has] traditionally been regarded as the dividing line between Europe and Asia."[184] However, in *A Hero of Our Time*, it is not the mountains, but the town of Taman that "invokes the border between ancient European civilization (Greek colonies in the Crimea) and the 'young' savage world of 'primitive' tribes" as Sobol argues.[185] Taman appears uncanny, or *unheimlich*, Sobol argues, due to its position between spaces represented in colonial discourse as sites of 'civility' and 'savagery.'

Taman functions as a stop on Pechorin's way to the Caucasus and shows Pechorin in an unfamiliar setting while simultaneously foreshadowing what is to come. Pechorin exhibits all the prejudices that a Russian coloniser would have against indigenous peoples in a colonial situation, claiming superiority over them, but also finding himself threatened by them. The uncanniness of the setting, described by Sobol, stems from Pechorin's being within the borders of his home-country, which appears remarkably foreign to him. In Taman, Pechorin is startled to see examples of what he perceives to be 'uncivility' before he even reaches his destination. However, as we saw in Chapter I, in Radishchev's representation of St. Petersburg there exists no physical boundary in Russia between the ethnocentric concepts of 'savagery' and 'civility.' Radishchev shows that barbarity very much existed at the very core of the Empire. While the outrage represented by Radishchev stems from the fact that the 'barbarians' were ethnically Russian, within this frontier space that Taman is, the identity of the local populations is unidentifiable. Here, the ambiguous ethnic identities of the people of Taman invokes fear, not outrage, in Pechorin who is represented as the 'civilised' person faced with the 'barbarity' of the local population. However, Pechorin's violent actions in "Taman" become a

---

[184] Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine…* p. 40
[185] Sobol, "The Uncanny Frontier…" p. 67

premonition of the degeneration into 'savagery' that later occurs in Pechorin's character, as Layton has shown.[186]

In Taman Pechorin struggles to comprehend what the people of the town are saying and finds himself unsure about their ethnic identities. As Shkandrij argues, because they are "equipped with the ability to understand without being themselves understood,"[187] they appear dangerous to Pechorin. Sometimes they speak Russian, at other times Ukrainian, and sometimes they speak a language he cannot identify. To add further to Pechorin's sense of danger, the blind boy is seen moving around with ease, and he takes on tasks, which Pechorin finds unsuitable for a blind person. The elderly deaf woman sometimes joins in conversation, and the young woman acts in an unpredictable manner, which makes Pechorin wonder if she is crazy. These instances make Sobol wonder if they "are deliberately performing their otherness."[188]

In Bhabha's terminology, performing otherness resembles the concept of mimicry where the hybrid assumes the image of its oppressor, by learning their language, adopting their religious rituals and so forth. However, in the instance of "Taman," the local population Pechorin encounters, are not assuming the image of their coloniser, but instead distancing themselves from that image. The performance of their otherness comes to resemble that of Pechorin, who steps in and out of his otherness later in the novel's chronology. However, while Pechorin is not perceived as 'other,' the people of Taman are. As we have seen, they are described with a physical or mental lack, which in Bhabhan terminology is typical of colonial discourse. In Bhabha's example of colonial discourse the colonised is presented as "human, but not wholly human."[189] This resembles the Russian colonial discourse, where colonised peoples were referred to as *inorodtsy*, *inovertsy*, or *nemtsy* (see Introduction). The colonial subject was in this way marked as 'other.' Through mimesis, though, the subject will try to conceal its 'lack,' although the 'lack' is still present in the colonial subject in suppressed form. This results in a splitting of the subject, which enables the subject to take two contradictory stances at once and the subject becomes both 'self' and 'other.' In Bhabha's words, the discriminatory colonial discourse results in "the splitting condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something *different* – a mutation, a hybrid."[190] According

[186] Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire…* p. 217
[187] Shkandrij, "*Russia and Ukraine: Literature…* p. 54
[188] Sobol, "The Uncanny Frontier…" p. 72
[189] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 122
[190] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 159 [original emphasis]

to Bhabha, the hybrid is "half acquiescent, half oppositional, always untrustworthy."[191] The untrustworthiness is due to the splitting of the colonial subject's psyche in which the hybrid's originary culture is lying latently but can rise to the surface at any time – much like we know it from psychoanalysis where a repressed memory can rise to the surface of a subject's conscience through *catharsis*.

In "Taman," Pechorin also notes how he cannot trust the local population. However, his lack of trust stems from his idea of a connection between physical appearance and a person's character: "I have observed that there is always some strange relationship between the external appearance of a man and his soul, as if with the loss of a limb the soul too has lost some faculty of feeling."[192] As Pechorin uses the physical appearance of the local population to judge their level of conscience, he is dehumanising them. "The motifs of monstrosity and physical deformation in 'Taman,'" Sobol argues, "fit perfectly into the pattern, characteristic of travel and ethnographic literature, that dehumanizes distant cultures and associates 'abnormality' with distance and otherness."[193] This is classic colonial discourse, in which the colonial subject is characterised by 'barbarity' and 'uncivility,' related to their physical 'lack,' which is used to emphasise the otherness of the colonial subjects.

Pechorin's tendency to link physical disabilities with people's souls, is a way of degrading the colonial subjects and is therefore a practice of hierarchisation and discrimination, typical of colonial discourse.[194] It is also an expression of Pechorin's desire for self-superiority referring to his status as both a coloniser and a superfluous man. Pechorin constructs the colonial subject, in this instance the people of Taman, through an articulation of cultural difference. However, it seems that in "Taman," the hybrid subjects of the small coastal town are able to navigate within their hybridity, in the sense that they can step in and out of their originary identities, hence the performative aspect of their otherness. The untrustworthiness that Pechorin feels toward them stems not just from his preconceptions about them, but also from their ability to perform their otherness. Pechorin is not the least bit surprised that they can speak Russian but is rather unsettled when they speak other languages.

Through the potential for revealing their originary culture through *catharsis,* the hybrid ensures the possibility for 'other' knowledges to enter the dominant discourse,[195] which then has the

---

[191] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 49
[192] Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time*, p. 54; Lermontov, *Geroi…* p. 66
[193] Sobol, "The Uncanny Frontier…" p. 69
[194] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 96
[195] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 162

potential to disturb the visibility of the colonial presence and the recognition of its authority.[196] In such an instance, hybridity is a problem for colonial authority, since it has the potential to disrupt power balances, and can lead to a reversal of the process of domination.[197] That is, hybridity enables the colonial subject to enter the dominant discourse and through a reversal of the existing discourse destroy the existing power relations. The hybridity of the local population, as well as their ability to step in and out of their otherness, thus becomes a problem for the recognition of Pechorin's authority, who represents the Russian Empire as a member of the military. However, as we shall see, Pechorin himself also becomes a problem for the recognition of the authority of the Empire.

Pechorin is a coloniser, and he conducts colonial discourse, but simultaneously exhibits qualities that are normally attached to colonial subjects, such as a violent and irrational nature. He is fond of the local customs but loathes the lifestyle of the *beau monde.* The most striking feature that he shares with Bhabha's hybrid is his untrustworthiness. Pechorin is able to step in and out of his otherness using it when it is beneficial to him. He represents a potential for rebellion, and although his rebellion is unsuccessful once it materialises, it only underscores his superfluity without diminishing his 'inverted hybridity.'

Since superfluity can only explain the outcome of Pechorin's actions, it is not a sufficient diagnosis of him since it does not explain the reasons behind his actions. Pechorin is made superfluous by a society that cannot accept his critical nature, but superfluity does not explain his violent and irrational actions. In a racist depiction of Caucasian culture, Lermontov draws on his own crooked views of the Caucasian peoples picking out undesirable traits to other the self of his anti-hero protagonist. By representing Pechorin as similar to the people of the Caucasus, he ensured that Pechorin would be seen as a villain, perhaps to illustrate that turning one's back to Western value-systems will only lead to depravity.

Although Lermontov's work takes place on the borders of the Empire, and he paints a damning portrait of his own protagonist, both Radishchev and Lermontov's depictions of Russians as 'uncivilised' and 'barbarian' are rooted in discourses of self-othering and self-Orientalism. Their depictions of Russians as struck by moral corruption appear similar, but whereas Radishchev had a clear message in his work (that serfdom and autocracy was morally wrong), there appears to be no such message in Lermontov's work. While in his foreword he attests that Pechorin is a representation of the vices of the generation of the 1840s, he provides no alternative or solution to these issues. As

[196] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 160 ("…faced with the hybridity of its objects, the presence of power is revealed as something other than what its rules of recognition assert.")
[197] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 159

we shall see in the coming chapters, Russian authors seem more enraged about the suffering of their compatriots than they do by the suffering of indigenous populations at the borders of the Empire. Nowhere is that more evident than in Lermontov's depiction of Pechorin. Lermontov even uses the racist stereotypes of Caucasian peoples to highlight Pechorin's depravity. Furthermore, Pechorin is himself outraged that society prescribes that he addresses certain people in a special way and that he is expected to dance when attending a ball, but completely indifferent to the Russian treatment of Caucasian peoples. This is perhaps the most extreme example of the indifference in Russian literature toward Russia's efforts of colonisation; an indifference which is often accompanied by self-othering and self-Orientalism. We have already seen this in Radishchev and Lermontov's work, and it will be seen in Leskov's and Belyi's as well. Although as time passes, the representation of the Russians in self-othering discourses change: Leskov's portrayal is heavily influenced by the emancipation of the serfs, whereas Belyi's is taken out of the Russo-Japanese war and used to warn the public of the Empire's impending fall.

Chapter III

The Slave and the Oppressor:

The 'Russian Paradox' in *The Enchanted Wanderer*

> Leskov is the most original Russian writer, free from any outside influences. Reading his books, you feel Rus better with all its bad and good, you see more lucidly the confused Russian man, who even when he sincerely believes in beauty and freedom, manages to be a slave of his faith and an oppressor of his neighbour.[198]
>
> Maxim Gorky, 1923

Written by Nikolai Leskov (1831-95), *The Enchanted Wanderer* (*Ocharovannii strannik*, 1873) records the journey of its *bogatyr'*-like hero, Fliagin from being a lowly serf to becoming a colonel in the Russian army and finally to finding a new life as a pious monk in a monastery. Over the course of this journey Fliagin witnesses first-hand the colonial endeavours of the Empire, both in the internal and external sense, and as Etkind argues, Fliagin becomes "both a witness to *and* an agent of colonialism."[199] In this chapter, I argue that Fliagin is a prime example of the 'Russian paradox,' which in my view consists in the tendency to condemn the suffering of Russians (ordinarily peasants), while remaining indifferent to the fate of indigenous peoples at the hands of the same empire.

Leskov emphasises the patriotic spirit of the peasantry in the representation of his hero. This feature in Leskov's portrayal of the peasant, is reminiscent of the views of the *narodnichestvo*-movement who saw the peasantry as strong-willed and as examples of the ideals who could bring revolution to Russia.[200] In doing so, however, Leskov inadvertently exposes one of the great paradoxes of Russian identity. While most Russians in the 1860s agreed that the former serfs had been the ones suffering the most from Russian policy, they simultaneously justified Russia's treatment of indigenous peoples in the periphery of the Empire through prejudiced colonial discourse – a prime example of the implications of the narrative of self-colonisation. This paradox comes to life through Fliagin. Born a serf, he is on a journey of self-realisation which leads him through many corners of the Empire. On his journey, he shows his capacity to be both colonised and coloniser

[198] Maxim Gorky, "N. S. Leskov" in N. S. Leskov, *Izbranie sochineniia*, vol. 1 (Berlin, St. Petersburg and Moscow: Izdatelstvo Z. I. Grzhebina, 1923), p. 13
[199] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 230 [original emphasis]
[200] See for instance, Vera Tolz, *Russia* (London & New York: Arnold & Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 94-96; Hosking, *Russia and the Russians: A History*, second edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 306-313; Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution: A Century of Russian Radicalism* (Guildford, Surrey: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 170-173

through, for instance, his vocal contempt for the people of the steppe (who remained unidentified in the novella). Simultaneously, Fliagin is destined through premonition to become a monk, and in this way, *The Enchanted Wanderer* comes to encapsulate a hero who in the words of Maxim Gorky is "a slave of his faith and an oppressor of his neighbour."

Viewed in the light of the implications of self-colonisation narratives, there are many similarities between Lermontov's creation of Pechorin and Leskov's hero. Like Pechorin, Fliagin moves around in different spaces and is seen in various social settings, and like Pechorin, Fliagin can conduct himself in any cultural environment, assimilating to different norms and practices. The 'inverted hybridity' that I examined in Pechorin's character (see Chapter II), is to an extent also found in Fliagin, although in a different form. While Pechorin was not so much affected by the othering discourse of the Empire because of his noble rank, he was instead more affected by the setting he was in, which led him to 'go native.' Fliagin is a self-colonised subject through his being a former serf, but like Pechorin he emerges as a character with opinions typical of a coloniser, as he engages in colonial discourse and uses racial stereotypes in his depiction of indigenous peoples in the Ryn Desert. That is, whilst he is othered by the Russian imperial machine, who subjugates serfs to an inferior status, Fliagin in turn others peoples of non-Russian origin. This feature in Pechorin's and Fliagin's characters is indicative of a contradictory empire, which subjugates both its Russian and non-Russian population.

The Enchanted Wanderer stands out among the works of realism published in the same period, when fierce debate ruled the world of Russian literature. It was the norm of the era that every writer should make their stance on current issues important for intellectual life in the cities clear through their literary production.[201] Instead, Leskov made use of *skaz*-narration to enhance the ambiguous representation of the Empire, as the reader is faced with the uneducated and unobservant narrative voice of Fliagin. Furthermore, Leskov presents his hero with reference to the folkloric figure, Ilya Muromets, a character of superhuman strength. The mix of realism and folklore is made even clearer when Fliagin's adventure becomes a quest for gaining a passport so that he can endeavour to realise himself. In the Russian Empire, one needed a passport to be able to move around freely, and these were not given to serfs. Seen in light of Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*

[201] See for instance: Mirsky, *A History*... pp. 171-172; James P. Scanlan, "Nikolaj Chernyshevsky and the Philosophy of Realism in Nineteenth-Century Russian Aesthetics," *Studies in Soviet Thought*, vol. 30, no. 1 (Jul. 1985), pp. 1-14; Richard Freeborn, "The Nineteenth Century: The Age of Realism, 1855-80" in Derek Moser (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 248-332; Derek Offord, "Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought and Literature" in Neil Cornwell (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 123-135.

(*Morfologiia skazki*, 1928), the passport emerges as an object of magical powers – one that crystallised tensions inherent to Russian imperialism.

Questioning the Empire: Leskov, Realism, and the *Narodnichestvo*

In 1862, Nikolai Leskov, working as a journalist in St. Petersburg, wrote an article in which he urged the police to investigate who was behind the fires that had engulfed the city. Rumours tended to blame radical university students or the so-called 'nihilists,' but Leskov did not agree with these rumours and called for the police to conduct a thorough investigation. However, according to D. S. Mirsky, in radical circles, this was taken as an attempt to incite the population against 'nihilism.' When Leskov, a year later, switched from journalism to fiction, he already had a bad reputation among critics in the radical literary journals, and his work was therefore often poorly received.[202] In addition, Mirsky writes,

> [The 1860s] was a time of intense party strife, when no writer could hope to be received well by all the critics, and only those who identified themselves with a definite party could hope for even a partial recognition. Leskov never identified himself with any party and had to take the consequences. His success with the reading public was considerable, but the critics continued to neglect him."[203]

The political climate of the 1860s and 70s is only one part of the explanation for the critics' neglect of Leskov's work. Another explanation is also its unique position at the height of Russian realism. The literary scene in the 1860s was marked by the duel between the superfluous man and the so-called 'new person,' intended to rid the nation of superfluity. But Leskov kept himself out of these discussions.

One of the proponents of the new person, Nikolai Chernyshevskii (1828-89), is generally portrayed as having defined the fundamental principles of Russian realism in his doctoral dissertation, *The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality* (*Esteticheskie otnosheniia iskusstva k deistvitel'nosti*, 1855), which set out the author's vision of how art should depict reality. According to Chernyshevskii, the aim of realist writing was to "enable people to understand life better,"[204] but the artist should never "refrain from pronouncing judgment on the phenomena he depicts,"[205] he argued. According to Molly

[202] Mirsky, *A History*... pp. 313-314
[203] Mirsky, *A History*... pp. 312-313
[204] Nicholas Chernyshevsky, "The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality," revised translation by James P. Scanlan, in James M. Edie, James P. Scanlan, Mary-Barbara Zeldin (eds.), *Russian Philosophy Volume II: The Nihilist, the Populists, Critics of Religion and Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), p. 24
[205] Chernyshevsky, "The Aesthetic Relations…" p. 25

Brunson, it was these ideas that lent the Russian variant of realism its distinctly critical perspective.[206] While the works of authors such as Dostoevskii, Ivan Turgenev, and Lev Tolstoi should clearly not be viewed solely through the lens of Chernyshevskii's principles, the prescriptive inclination of his dissertation does reflect one general tendency of the age, when authors used literary works and characters to advance competing arguments about society.

This feature of Russian realist writing is subtly summed up by the quarrel between Chernyshevskii and Dostoevskii that started when the former published his utopian sketch of Russian society under the title *What's to be Done?* (*Chto delat'?* 1863), originally intended as a response to Turgenev's caricature of the radicals, Bazarov, from his novel *Fathers and Sons* (*Otsy i deti*, 1862). Dostoevskii was provoked by what he perceived as a naïve and idealistic portrayal of the St. Petersburg radicals defying the conventions outlined by the Russian autocracy in the Table of Ranks. The character Lopukhov from Chernyshevskii's work rebelled against the Table of Ranks by shoving a high-ranking official onto the curb on the streets of St. Petersburg in a rebellion against the arbitrariness of the Table. Dostoevskii then imitated this situation in his novel, *Notes from Underground* (*Zapiski iz podpol'ia*, 1864), but his portrayal ends with humiliation as the Underground Man falls onto the curb when the officer does not give way to him.[207] In this instance, Lopukhov is the positive portrayal of the new person, while in Dostoevskii's portrayal, the same monological discourse which David Patterson found in the superfluous man, which never changes and results in nothing, exists in the Underground Man.[208] When the Underground Man finally decides to rebel against the standing order of society, he fails miserably, underscoring his "unconventionality when juxtaposed with society,"[209] as Ellen Chances puts it.

The creation of Fliagin is a very good example of Leskov's ambiguous relation to the society in which he lived. As mentioned, Leskov made it up to his readers to judge what they saw in his writing, and in this way, he clearly deviates from Chernyshevskii's ideal of realism, according to which an author should always judge the phenomena that they depicted. The creation of Fliagin, which by many contemporary critics was seen as a conclusively positive character who exhumed true Russian values, without being touched by the ailment of Westernism that, in the eyes of some, ran rampant in the capital, is not as straightforward, however. From reading *The Enchanted Wanderer*

---

[206] Molly Brunson, *Russian Realisms: Literature and Painting, 1840-1890* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016), p. 68

[207] See for instance Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 84

[208] Patterson, "The Loss of the Word…" p. 6

[209] Chances, *Conformity's Children…* p. 20

one does not get the sense that this is a conclusively positive portrayal of a serf who has freed himself. Instead, this is the portrayal of the hybrid qualities of the Russian people, who can be both colonised and coloniser simultaneously. It is a people that take offence at the oppression of the nation's peasants, with whom they share kinship, but turn a blind eye upon the oppression of indigenous peoples in the periphery of the Empire. Fliagin is the prime example of this feature of Russian identity.

Fliagin was born out of the increased consideration of the country's peasants, which had been growing throughout the nineteenth century. The issues that the peasants had faced and continued to face, were laid bare by the reform of 1861. After the abolition of serfdom many, especially intellectuals in Russia's cities, were left unsatisfied, complaining that it did not considerably improve the conditions of the peasantry. What angered them was that the reform, although it had emancipated 24,279,500 serfs, or roughly 40 % of the population,[210] and ensured the mobility of the peasants,[211] it still assured that the peasantry would live in deep debts for 49 years following a two-year transitional period after the emancipation, meaning until 1912.[212] The reform, which was a compromise between the interests of the government, landowners and the enserfed peasants,[213] stipulated that the peasants would be allowed to buy land to live off from their former owners, but the peasants would have to take out mortgages to do so. Because of their debts, one could argue that the peasants were continually tied to the land, their only source of income, until they had paid off their mortgage. It ensured that the landowners would continually support the Tsar, while avoiding large scale peasant uprisings. However, many in the cities who had been advocating for the abolition of serfdom, were enraged that the peasants would not get a considerably better deal after 200 years of oppression.

In the cities, discontent grew and along with it came a rise in socialist radical groups – especially in university environments. In their view, the Russian peasantry who largely lived in peasant communes, often viewed as proto-socialist societies by the radicals, were specially fitted to realise the socialist ideal.[214] Eventually, the group referred to as *narodnichestvo* grew into significance and initiated the 'going to the people'-movement (*khozhdenie v narod*) in the summer of 1874. Thousands of students left the universities to take up life in rural Russia. They abandoned any hopes of a career as well as family and friends to be part of the movement and to work as teachers

---

[210] Willard Sunderland, "The Greatest Emancipator…" p. 568
[211] See for instance: Steven Nafziger, "Communal property rights and land redistributions in Late Tsarist Russia," *Economic History Review*, vol. 69, no. 3 (2016), p. 779-780
[212] David Moon, *The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia, 1762-1907* (London and Edinburgh: Pearson Education, 2001), pp. 65-71
[213] Moon, *The Abolition of Serfdom…* p. 83
[214] Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution…* p. 171

and medical orderlies in local schools or hospitals. They distributed socialist propaganda, in the hope of inciting revolutionary thought in the peasantry:[215] "Every moment we felt that we were needed, that we were not superfluous,"[216] *narodnik* Vera Figner wrote, underscoring the craving for a sense of usefulness amongst the nation's urban population. The intention was to raise the peasantry's levels of consciousness and to instil within them that the Tsar was responsible for their suffering.

But the movement never succeeded in bringing revolution to the Russian countryside. Instead, the movement exposed the degrading attitude toward the peasantry that existed in Russia's cities and raises the question of distinguishing between coloniser and colonised. The core idea behind the movement was based on the notion that the peasantry needed to be brought into the light through an awakening of socialist spirit, which the *narodniki* believed was inherent in the peasantry. In this sense, it resembles the Bhabhan definition of colonial discourse, where the colonised is represented with a lack (see Chapter II). It was the *narodniki*'s mission to elevate the consciousness of the peasantry, which is a fundamentally prejudiced undertaking.

The notion of nationalists showing prejudiced attitudes toward the peasantry against the will of the state, has been seen elsewhere in history too. Partha Chatterjee describes a similar instance in India:

> For [Indian nationalists] the peasants were simple and ignorant, unaware of the fact that their poverty was the result of the exploitative nature of colonial rule and therefore in need of being woken up to a new consciousness, of being guided and led into effective political action by a nationalist organization. […] …both colonial and nationalist politics thought of the peasantry as an object of their strategies, to be acted upon, controlled and appropriated within their respective structures of state power.[217]

As the *narodnichestvo* was not mandated by the state, but working against the state, many were arrested for their revolutionary activity both in the metropoles as well as in the rural regions. The movement, however, exposed Russia as a society full of contradictions and blurry distinctions between self and other, but it also shows the general attitude of Russia's metropolitan population toward the peasantry. Both proponents of the state and its opponents attempted to take advantage of the peasantry in the pursuit of their respective causes.

---

[215] See for instance, Tolz, *Russia*, pp. 94-96; Hosking, *Russia and the Russians…* pp. 306-312; Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution…* pp. 170-173

[216] Vera Figner, *Zapechatlennyi trud* (Moscow: *Mysl*, 1964), pp. 164-165. Quoted in Hosking, *Russia and the Russians…* p. 311.

[217] Partha Chatterjee, "The Nation and its Peasants" in Vinayak Chaturvedi (ed.), *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London & New York: Verso, 2000), p. 9

The downfall of the 'going to the people'-movement proved that the cultural gap between the young university students and the peasants was too big. The *narodniki* were inspired by the socialist and Marxist ideas coming out of Western Europe, and therefore regarded Orthodoxy as superstition, contrary to the peasants who were largely practicing the Orthodox faith. Additionally, being radical feminists and therefore not adhering to the traditional gender norms which were prevalent in the peasantry, the male *narodniki* would have long hair and wear skirts, while the women would cut their hair short and wear plain shirts and heavy boots.[218] The *narodniki*'s defiance of society's gender conventions was a completely alien idea to the ordinary peasant. While the peasants did share some of the *narodiki*'s views on egalitarianism, the peasants believed that the commune was secured by the Tsar, while the *narodniki* opposed autocracy and saw the Tsar as the one responsible for the peasants' suffering. Essentially, the movement failed because the *narodniki* were fundamentally unfamiliar with peasant culture, and *vice versa*.

One of the reasons that the *narodnichestvo* was unfamiliar with peasant culture was presumably that they were never exposed to peasants in their urban existence. This issue reiterates Radishchev's words from his dedication of *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* in which he urged people "to inspect closely what surrounds [them],"[219] (see Chapter I). The portrayal of peasants in contemporary popular culture had created a mirage of the peasants as the holders of a particularly Russian truth. Such representations were prevalent in literary magazines and *lubki*-prints, a type of visual folk art often found in people's homes and taverns that were popular in the 1860s.[220] In these, peasants were portrayed as powerful and able to change their fate, which is a trait that also characterises Fliagin.

Fliagin is strong and changes his situation several times. First, he escapes from his enserfment, eventually ending up in military service where he receives the rank of colonel, before he takes a position in civil service. But there is a second dimension to Fliagin's existence: suffering. He is given a premonition which says that until he joins a monastery, he will continuously suffer without dying. This means even after escaping the estate to which he was bound, his suffering does not end. When he escapes, he initially is forced to live in flight given his lack of a passport, which among other things leads to him being enslaved in the Ryn Desert. But even after he has gained a passport

---

[218] Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 310

[219] Radishchev, *Journey…* p. 1; Radishchev, *Puteshestvie…* p. 1

[220] See for instance Jeffrey Brooks, "The Russian Nation Imagined: The Peoples of Russia as Seen in Popular Imagery, 1860s-1890s," *Journal of Social History*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2010), pp. 533-558 and Alla Sytova, Elena Itkina, Elena Mishina, Natalia Rudakova, Antonina Sakovich, *The Lubok: Russian Folk Pictures 17th to 19th Century* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1984), pp. 5-16

and risen in rank due to his miraculous efforts in the Caucasus, he suffers from boredom working as a clerk at an address bureau. And when he finally joins the monastery, he dreams of returning to the front so that he can die for his country.

In this way, Fliagin towards the end of the novel comes to resemble the superfluous men of Russian literature. While he is able to change his situation, which is unusual for a superfluous man, he repeatedly feels unhappy with his position, whether that be as a serf or as an office clerk. His ability to act and indeed his ability to defy the distinctions between the classes that embodied Russian post-Petrine society resembles Chernyshevskii's new people more than it does the superfluous men. But he is not quite a new person either. Like the superfluous man, the new person would be educated and well-read, but Fliagin has never had access to formal education. Leskov created a character-based work, which was the norm of the era, but his character was fundamentally different from the characters created by the giants of Russian realism. There was no moralistic message at the end, and Fliagin does not serve as either a model for or a warning against a certain way of life. Instead, in a world of binaries, he exists in the in-between. This was an era where the future of the Russian Empire was the central topic in literary debate, and most authors presented their own ideas of how it should or should not look. Leskov instead chose to merely portray it, letting his readers see the Empire through the scope of an escaped peasant.

As Walter Benjamin argued, Leskov was ambiguous in his writing, seemingly taking no position, passing no judgment:

> Leskov is a master at [keeping his narrative free from judgment]. (…) [E]xtraordinary things, marvelous things, are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks.[221]

Instead, while adventuring through the Russian Empire, Fliagin sees and recognises its nature for the very first time, resulting in an innocent and naïve vision of it, in which no phenomena are explained, but merely represented in the realm of existence. Mikhail Bakhtin characterises this type of narration in Leskov's work as *skaz*, that is a narrational style akin to oral speech. Bakhtin argues that the use of *skaz* entails for the author to adopt a type of language which is not their own, as *skaz* usually was

[221] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," translated by Harry Zohn, *Chicago Review*, vol 16, no. 1 (Winter - Spring 1963), p. 85

spoken by people of lower social statuses.[222] Fliagin's narrative voice is void of poetic speech; he does not use similes or metaphors, but rather describes what he sees and what happens matter-of-factly. An example of this prosaic matter of fact-narration occurs when Fliagin describes his decision to commit suicide after having received a severe beating from his master:

> That tormented me so much that I kept thinking and thinking how to get out of it, and decided to put an end to my life. I provided myself with a stout cord, having begged the houseboy, and went for a swim in the evening, then to the aspen grove behind the threshing floor, got on my knees, prayed for all Christians, tied the cord to a branch, made a noose and put my head in it.[223]

Without any testaments to how Fliagin felt, why he decided to go for a swim before his attempted suicide, or his emotions while putting the noose over his head, Leskov lets Fliagin narrate the story throughout the novella in this matter-of-fact way. The implied author never shows any deep considerations of Fliagin's feelings, neither regarding his own circumstances, nor of the Russian Empire. Furthermore, the *skaz* narrative, which is the outcome of Fliagin's lowly social status and the absence of a third person narrator, ensures the absence of any poetic rendition of Fliagin's life story as it is told to the other passengers on the boat on Lake Ladoga.

The *skaz* narrative has further implications: While it serves as an indication that the story is narrated by an uneducated individual, it also ensures that no judgment is passed on the Russian Empire as it is represented through the distanced narrative voice of Fliagin. The 1860s and 70s were characterised by intellectual debate about the future of the Russian Empire, which revolved around finding and defining the ideal identity that would secure the Russian future. Some, like Dostoevskii, believed that Orthodoxy was the main pillar of Russian identity,[224] while others were inspired by Marxism in creating their special version of Russian socialism that substituted the proletariat for the *narod*.[225] These debates materialised themselves through the medium of literature where superfluous men created by conservative authors were meant to expose the pitfalls of Westernism. The superfluous men were challenged by the creation of so-called 'new men,' of which Chernyshevskii's

---

[222] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, edited and translated by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 192

[223] Nikolai Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer & Other Stories*, translated by Richard Pevear & Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Vintage, 2014), p. 126; Leskov, *Sochineniia v trekh tomakh,* vol. 1, (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), p. 552

[224] Mirsky, *A History*… p. 270

[225] This is especially evident in the *narodnichestvo*-movement. See for instance: Tolz, *Russia*, pp. 94-96; Hosking, *Russia and the Russians…* pp. 306-312; Yarmolinsky, *Road to Revolution*… pp. 170-173

Rakhmetov from *What's to be Done?* serves as a prime example. Leskov, however, kept himself out of these discussions, by not adhering to the norms of Russian realism.

It was perceived that the task for any author at this stage of Russian literary history was to follow Chernyshevskii's doctrine and depict reality while passing judgment on it, and the most pressing issues in literary circles was the definition of an ideal character to carry Russia forward, be it among the peasantry or the strong-willed socialist revolutionaries. But in the age of questioning the Empire and presenting answers to the questions raised, it is unclear what Leskov's answers were, and even at times which questions he raises. Leskov merely represented the Russian Empire, leaving it up to the reader to pass their judgment and he thereby takes a peculiar position amongst Russian realists of the 1860s and 70s, which not only materialises in his mode of narration, but also in the blend of realism and folklore Leskov makes use of.

In-Between Superfluity and 'Newness': Mixing Realism with Folklore

Fliagin exists somewhere in-between the superfluous man and the new man. Leskov's work in itself also exists in the in-between, as it mixes a realist style with a narrative structure that resembles that of the folktale; it is this mix that creates the ambiguity of the novella's protagonist and enables him to exhibit both superfluous and 'new' qualities. The narrative of *The Enchanted Wanderer* is clearly inspired by folklore, which the principal narrator makes clear from the very beginning of the novella when its hero is likened with Ilya Muromets, the famous *bogatyr'* (folkloric hero). "[H]e was a mighty man [*bogatyr'*] in the fullest sense of the word, and a typical, artless, kind Russian mighty man at that, reminiscent of old Ilya Muromets."[226] Ilya Muromets was a folkloric character, the son of a peasant who after a serious disease lost the ability to walk until two pilgrims healed him. He then became of superhuman strength and liberated Kyiv single-handedly from the evil monster, *Idolishche Poganoe*, or 'pagan idol.'[227]

The comparison made by the principal narrator, a passenger on a boat on Lake Ladoga north of St. Petersburg, is solely based on Fliagin's appearance. But considering Fliagin's narrative, he does make himself appear *bogatyr'*-like. His premonition of being promised to God, effectively means that he is immortal, although continuously suffering, which means that he can throw himself into dangerous situations without fearing for his life. This, on the other hand, results in an outspoken desire to die, as he wants nothing more than to die for his country. But this wish cannot be fulfilled until he

[226] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer...* p. 108; Leskov, *Sochineniia…* p. 534
[227] See Vsevolod Miller, "Ilya Muromets" in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgausa i Efrona*

has lived up to his premonition which proves particularly difficult since he is without a passport. His life as an escaped serf quickly turns into a quest to obtain a passport, so that he can fulfil his promise and perhaps even go to war and die for his country. While the narrative of the novella is akin to folktales, his suffering is based on the conditions of life for an escaped serf in the Russian Empire. The folkloric elements are in this way mixed with realism.

In Vladimir Propp's assessment of *The Morphology of the Folktale* every folktale contains a magical object which will help the hero complete his quest.[228] Fliagin's quest is to fulfil the premonition put on him, and go live as a monk, and to complete this he needs a passport, which emerges as a magical object to solve his problems. But when young Fliagin has a chance to be allowed to go to the monastery after earning a favour from his master, he instead asks for a concertina:

> I ought to have taken advantage of the count's favour on that occasion and asked to go to a monastery right then, as the monk had advised; but, without knowing myself, I had asked for a concertina, and had thereby refuted my very first calling, and on account of that went from one suffering to another, enduring more and more, yet didn't die of any of them, until everything the monk had predicted to me in my vision came true in real life because of my mistrust.[229]

In these retrospective remarks Fliagin notes how his decision condemned him for the rest of his life. The mistrust he felt toward his master, who had made him continually suffer, ironically led him to continually suffer for the rest of his life. This element of the plot is also a very good example of the mix of realism and folklore that exists throughout the story. Fliagin is visited in a dream in which he receives his premonition from a monk that he had inadvertently killed. But he violates the interdiction spoken unto him by the monk, which is a typical folkloric element, according to Propp.[230] When he violates the monk's interdiction, his fate is exposed to him, and this is when he realises that he needs a passport. The passport then emerges as a Proppian magical object, which will enable Fliagin to complete his quest to fulfil the monk's premonition.

Walter Benjamin called *The Enchanted Wanderer* "a hybrid of fairy tale and legend,"[231] and this is true of certain events in the novella which seem exaggerated and untrustworthy. On the other hand, Fliagin's circumstances as they develop over the course of the narrative, seem completely

---

[228] Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, translated by Laurence Scott, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), pp. 35-36
[229] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer...* pp. 123-124; Leskov, *Sochineniia…* pp. 549-550
[230] Propp, *Morphology...* pp. 27-28
[231] Benjamin, "The Storyteller…" p. 97

realistic, since, although hierarchies encumbered Russian imperial society, works of realism often erased them.[232] Fliagin's rise through the ranks begins after his escape from the Ryn Desert where he has been held a as a slave. He then obtains a passport from the parents of a dead soldier, enabling him to join the army in the Caucasus. He is soon granted the rank of colonel, and takes up a position in civil service, before he finally decides to go to the monastery. Fliagin's rise through the ranks from slave to colonel is astronomic indeed, but it does not satisfy him. His journey is one of self-realisation which for him is achieved by dying for his country: "I want very much to die for my people,"[233] he admits to his fellow travellers on Lake Ladoga. His journey of self-realisation then becomes a quest with a view to making himself useful for Russia, but this cannot come true before his premonition is upheld.

In imperial Russia, serfs were outside of the law and could not take part in society or serve the state; they had to serve their masters. Like the peasant portrayals in the *lubki*, Fliagin is patriotic and strong-willed, but unlike the peasants in the *lubki*, he cannot accept his place. Contrasting the superfluous men, who largely must accept the fact that they cannot, or will not, be useful for Russia, Fliagin is determined to not let superfluity become his fate. He quickly discovers, after his adventures in the Caucasus where his immortality is reiterated when he escapes a suicide mission without a scratch, that life as a civil servant is not a path to usefulness. The post he was assigned in the address bureau was utterly meaningless, as he was assigned a letter which was practically never used.[234] Left with the prospect of living on the streets with no money, Fliagin then goes to live in the monastery.[235]

The office clerk is a classic character in Russian literature. In short phrases, Leskov makes subtle references to office clerks like Nikolay Gogol's Akakii Akakiievich from "The Overcoat" ("Shinel," 1842) and Dostoevskii's Goliadkin from *The Double* (*Dvoinik*, 1846), doing meaningless work: "[Ѳ is] the most insignificant letter (…) even those that should belong to it, (…) puts F in place of Ѳ. (...) There is no use at all, yet you sit there."[236] The striking difference from Fliagin and the characters mentioned here is not that he realises the meaninglessness of his work, but that he leaves his post. The basic rules of superfluity which these 'little-man' office clerks are suffering from were

---

[232] Freeborn, "The Nineteenth Century…" p. 257
[233] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer…* p. 229; Leskov, *Sochineniia…* p. 655
[234] Fliagin was assigned the letter *fita* (Ѳ), which is an early Cyrillic letter derived from the Greek letter *theta* (Θ). It remained in use until 1918, but in Brockhaus and Efron's Russian encyclopaedia from 1890-1907, Russian linguist Sergei Bulich attests that many philologists have noted the letter's "uselessness and redundancy [*nenuzhnost i izlishnost*]." See Sergei Konstantinovich Bulich, "Ѳ" in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgausa i Efrona*
[235] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer…* pp. 219-221; Leskov, *Sochineniia…* pp. 645-647
[236] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer…* p. 219; Leskov, *Sochineniia…* p. 645

identified in the introduction to this dissertation as an inability to change their situation:[237] they do not apply to Fliagin. This is presumably due to his *bogatyr'*-like nature; while his life is an endless struggle to find his place, which is defining for the superfluous man, he changes his situation several times, and it seems that Fliagin always keeps the hope of making himself useful. However, each major change to his situation leads him into dissatisfaction, much like a superfluous man. When he is in the Caucasus, he creates miracles, but it leads to him being promoted to colonel, which then leads him to his pointless post. As a civil servant he is once again unsuited, and when he goes to the monastery, he dreams of going back to the front. "Are you prepared to go to war yourself?" someone on the boat asks Fliagin, who replies "What else, sir? Certainly: I want very much to die for my people. (…) I'll take the cowl off and put on a uniform."[238] Thus, much like the superfluous man, Fliagin struggles to find the place given to him by society acceptable, but whether he will ever be able to achieve his wish to die for his country, remains uncertain. In this way Fliagin emerges as superfluous.

It is the mix of folklore and realism which enables Fliagin to emerge as an unusual superfluous man. He can do many things that the traditional superfluous men could not, but he cannot change his fate, which was to become a pious and obedient servant of God. Fliagin's desire to die for his country seems to much outweigh his piety, but his premonition and by extension the Orthodox Church hinder him from fulfilling his most dire wish. Leskov was a known critic of the Orthodox Church and even had some of his later works banned on the instruction of the Church. Thus, it is not unthinkable that *The Enchanted Wanderer* is meant as a criticism of Orthodoxy. As R. A. Peace writes: "[Fliagin] the 'Russian', the 'enchanted wanderer' is still moving on from one bizarre episode to another – but will his fate ultimately be religious? Leskov himself does not seem to be entirely sure."[239] In Leskov's view, it would seem, the peasant was the epitome of the patriotic Russian, and it was the peasants that the metropolitan Russians should look to for guidance. But it was not socialism or Orthodoxy that would be the path that Russia should follow, but rather patriotism.

In an era where the future of the Russian Empire was continuously put into question by the leading authors and critics, Leskov's answer does not take into account the quarrel between the conservative and socialist intellectuals. While many were looking to the peasantry to find the true Russian path, either based in Orthodoxy or socialism, Leskov instead praised the patriotic spirit of the *narod*. As the *narodnichestvo* had learned, the peasantry's allegiance to the Tsar could not be

---

[237] See for instance, Chances, *Conformity's Children…* pp. 17-18; Patterson, "The Loss of the Word…" pp. 4-5; Gheith, "The Superfluous Man…" p. 230

[238] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer...* p. 229; Leskov, *Sochineniia...* p. 655

[239] R. A. Peace, "*The Enchanted Wanderer*: A Parable of Russian Identity," *Russian Literature*, vol. 29 (1991), p. 452

challenged. But, as Fliagin escapes serfdom and the rural areas of Russia, he quickly becomes struck with the condition that has hit so many other individuals in the cities: superfluity. However, given that he is not born into his position in the Table of Ranks, but rather achieved it with the mix of good fortune and magical powers, he immediately changes his situation, instead of falling into a pit of sorrow and inertia.

In this sense, Fliagin contains traits of both the superfluous man and the new person. The superfluous traits, however, are largely the fault of the Russian Empire and not an expression of personal incapacities, which represents a deviation from the traditional superfluous man. Leskov created an ambiguous portrayal of a peasant that borrowed from the peasant portrayals in the *lubki*; Fliagin is patriotic and vigorous, although sometimes irrational, he does not shy away from violence, and seemingly has no sense for ethical issues. Leskov's representation of this serf is unique: Fliagin is neither superfluous or new, and yet, he is simultaneously both. Leskov makes use of narrative devices normally found in folktales, but the setting is strikingly realistic, and it is in this 'folkloric realism' that Fliagin can emerge as something in-between superfluity and newness.

As Fliagin emerges as both superfluous and new, over the course of the novella he also adopts an ability that was defining for Russian identity. It was what Maxim Gorky called being "a slave of his faith and an oppressor of his neighbour," that is, he has no sympathy for the indigenous peoples living within Russia's borders at this time because of his Orthodox beliefs. *The Enchanted Wanderer* emerges in this way as a work that, not unlike *A Hero of Our Time*, orientalises the external simultaneously with the internal. But while *The Enchanted Wanderer* speaks against the oppression of Russian peasants, the work accepts the oppression of peoples living on the borders of the Empire.

Orientalising the Core and Periphery: A Parable of the 'Russian Paradox'

As I argued in Chapter I of this dissertation, the frame of *The Enchanted Wanderer*'s narrative resembles the frame of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), where the narrative begins on a boat far away from where the action of the narrative is set. Like Radishchev and Lermontov, Leskov too orientalises Russia, but while Radishchev's traveller stayed in the heartland of Russia, and Pechorin travelled in the Caucasus, Fliagin travels far and wide in many corners of the Empire, sometimes voluntarily, sometimes not. While doing so, he comes across people from virtually every social stratum imaginable, apart from other serfs. He has a fistfight with an officer of the army, he trains horses with a noble Prince and is held captive in the Ryn Desert by an ill-defined people of the steppe. Over the course of his journey, as Etkind argues, Fliagin becomes "both a witness to *and* an

agent of colonialism."[240] This materialises in a paradox where Fliagin takes conflicting positions when, as he retells his life story, he portrays serfdom as violent and inhumane, but he simultaneously defends the use of violence against the peoples he calls 'Asiatics.'

The novella begins on a boat on Lake Ladoga where a passenger comments on the depressing surroundings:

> After the visit to Korela, it was quite natural that our conversation should turn to that poor, though extremely old, Russian settlement, than which it would be hard to imagine anything sadder. Everyone on the boat shared that opinion, and one of the passengers, a man inclined to philosophical generalisations and political jesting, observed that he could in no way understand why it was customary that people objectionable in Petersburg should be sent to some more or less remote place or other, when right here, near the capital, on the shore of Ladoga, there is such an excellent place as Korela, where no freethinking or liberal-mindedness would be able to withstand the apathy of the populace and the terrible boredom of the oppressive meagre natural life.[241]

The representation of Korela as boring and oppressive is an obvious orientalisation of Central Russia just beyond the borders of the capital, reminiscent of Radishchev's representation (see Chapter I). Here is a character, who is presumably a caricature of city-folk brought up in the literary salons of St. Petersburg or Moscow and university-educated, shielded from exposure to the ways of life in the Russian countryside. It seems paradoxical that a novella written in a frame akin to travel literature would not only take place in the homeland of its author, but also would create such a deeply orientalised picture of it. However, this paradox, as we have seen, exists in other Russian literary works, and becomes a recurring in theme in nineteenth century literary production.

O. E. Maiorova argues that "the semantic centre of [*The Enchanted Wanderer*] lies not in the representation of Russianness (…) and not in the construction of national identity, but in its problematisation, in revealing its deep vulnerability, [and its] blurring and elusive nature."[242] That is, Fliagin is created as an expression of Russian identity, with all the contradictions that this entails: he is at once the ideal Russian in terms of his sentiments toward the nation, and yet, he is at the same time violent and irrational, and deciding conclusively whether he belongs within the category of 'selfness' or otherness is difficult. In the very beginning of the novella, Fliagin inadvertently kills a monk, and he tortures a cat as revenge for it having killed baby pigeons he was taking care of. The

[240] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 230 [original emphasis]
[241] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer…* p. 107; Leskov, *Sochineniia…* p. 533
[242] O. E. Maiorova, "*Opyt reinterpretatsii 'Ocharovannogo strannika' N. S. Leskova*" in *Russko-frantsuzskii razgovornik, ili / ou Les Causeries du 7 Septembre* (Moscow: *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 2015), p. 353

violence and irrationality that young Fliagin exposes, is a typical trait applied to colonial subjects in orientalist literature. But at the same time, he is devoted to the Orthodox faith, which in the Nationality Doctrine of 1833 was stipulated as the defining feature of selfhood in the Russian Empire, as we shall see.

But as was the case in *A Hero of Our Time*, aptitude for violence is celebrated in *The Enchanted Wanderer*. When on the steppe Fliagin comes across a whip fight among a steppe people, he asks another Russian onlooker: "So what they're doing is like when our gentlemen fight a duel?" and he replies "Yes, (…) it's kind of a duel, only not for the sake of honour, but so as not to spend their money."[243] The tradition of duelling amongst noblemen is here compared with the whip fights that the people of the steppe would have in order to determine who had the right to buy a horse. The only element that distinguishes the gentlemen's duel from the whip fight, is the weapon of choice. The Russians would use pistols, rather than whips, and this could be the difference between civility and savagery in the eyes of the Russian noblemen. However, what is pointed to here with the comparison of the two, is that the Russians have their own violent traditions, not unlike the people they colonise.

But Fliagin is not able to see this paradox, when talking about missionaries in the Ryn Desert:

> The Asiatic has to be brought to faith by fear, so that he's shaking with fright, but [the missionaries] preach a meek God to him. At the outstart that's no good at all, because without threats an Asiatic will never respect a meek God for anything and will kill the preachers."[244]

Violence, it would seem in Fliagin's mind, is the only way the pejoratively termed people, the 'Asiatics,' will convert to Orthodoxy. And yet, when noblemen are quarrelling, they often resort to violence to solve their differences. But Fliagin emerges as a product of the 'Russian paradox' himself. When in the desert for ten years he engages in polygamy and has several children, but admits that he did not love them, simply because they were not baptised according to the Orthodox faith:

> "That's the Tartar way. For them, if it's a grown Russian man – it's *Ivan*, if it's a woman – it's *Natasha*, and boys they call *Kolka*, and so my wives, though they were Tartars, were counted as Natashas because of me, and the boys were Kolkas. Though all this, naturally, was only superficial, because they had no Church sacraments, and I didn't consider them my children."
>
> "So you didn't consider them yours? Why was that?"

[243] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer…* p. 142; Leskov, *Sochineniia…* p. 568-569
[244] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer…* p. 159; Leskov, *Sochineniia…* p. 686

> "How could I, when they weren't baptised or anointed with oil?"
> "And your parental feelings?"
> "What's that, sir?"
> "Can it be that you didn't love these children at all and never caressed them?"
> "Why should I caress them? Naturally, if I happened to be sitting alone and one of them came running up, well, I'd just pat him on the head and tell him: "Go to your mother" – only that rarely happened, because I couldn't be bothered with them."
> "Why couldn't you be bothered: did you have so much to do?"
> "No, sir, I had nothing to do, but I was pining away: I wanted very much to go home to Russia."
> "So in ten years you still didn't get used to the steppe?"
> "No, sir, I wanted to go home…"[245]

The paradox here is that while Fliagin criticises the steppe people for considering his children Kolkas, or Russians, he did not consider his children his own, simply because they were not purely Russian. Additionally, he wants to leave and return home to Russia, the irony here being that he was already in Russia, although the Empire's control over this area was very limited and was still undergoing processes of internal colonisation as the missionaries travelling the area attest to. With these contradictions presented through Fliagin, he emerges as something that could be in the words of R. A. Peace be called "a parable of Russian national identity." But while Peace saw the indifference that Fliagin feels towards his children as a testament to his strong religious feelings,[246] I would rather see it as a testament to the paradox of Fliagin's identity: he is "both a witness to *and* an agent of colonialism." When considering his judgment of the steppe people for not considering his children their own, he, their father, cannot bring himself to love them or even consider them part of his blood because they are in his view not Russian.

However, when Orthodox missionaries come to the desert and meet Fliagin, they refuse to help him. "Wherever we go, we do not quarrel," they tell him, "it is not befitting for us. You are a slave and, no help for it, you must endure, for, according to the apostle Paul, slaves should obey."[247] Once again, Fliagin is treated as an inferior individual, and it establishes Leskov's criticism of the Orthodox church. If the apostle Paul says slaves should obey, then why would the Orthodox church question slavery or serfdom? The Russian state was built on a foundation of Orthodoxy, Autocracy

[245] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer...* p. 153; Leskov, *Sochineniia…* p. 680
[246] R. A. Peace, "*The Enchanted Wanderer…*" p. 442
[247] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer...* p. 158; Leskov, *Sochineniia…* p. 685

and Nationality (the Nationality Doctrine), and in this way the Orthodox church becomes an advocate for the continued subjugation of the Russian serfs and peasants.

And the paradox goes even deeper: Fliagin is not even considered fit to serve the Russian state after his escape from the Ryn Desert because he was born a serf. He is outside of the law without a passport, but still seems to wholeheartedly support the authorities who were the proponents of a law that restricted his mobility, made him the property of someone else and made it legal for someone to practise corporeal punishment. However, as we have seen, it was this same paradox that the *narodnichestvo* came across in 1874 when they learned that the peasants in general supported the Tsar. It is in itself paradoxical that when contemporary city-folk could see that the *narod* were suffering, and who was responsible, that the suffering peasantry refused to blame the Tsar who had ensured that their masters could beat them.

The hardship under which Russia's peasants lived has led some academics to argue that serfs were suffering more than the people absorbed by Russian colonial expansion. Etkind, for instance, writes:

> While colonial subjects could not have become serfs, generations of Russian peasants were effectively enslaved. The Poles, Jews, Tatars, Chechens, and Finns suffered immensely, but they were not subject to any worse treatment than the empire inflicted on Russian serfs. Awkward and obsolete, in the middle of the nineteenth century Russian domestic institutions had far less of the characteristics of modern society than European empires had, in their colonies as well as at home. In fact, Russians were more heavily taxed and restricted in their rights than many non-Russians. It was an odd empire; many crucial relations were the obverse of what was seen in other empires. Nowhere else was the interconnection between the internal and the external as visible as in Russian politics.[248]

Such arguments, however, diminish the significance of the peoples suffering at the hands of the Russian Empire in its external and subsequent internal colonisations. Similar sentiments were also utilised by groups like the *narodnichestvo* for instance, who turned a blind eye to the suffering of the indigenous peoples at Russia's borders but advocated strongly for the abolition of serfdom and the improvement of the peasants' conditions after 1861. Crucially, Fliagin is an expression of these sentiments as well. In the desert, Fliagin reiterates the official policy that Orthodoxy was the dividing line between self and other. While the serfs were subjected to different laws than the un-enserfed, the indigenous peoples, although they often had more rights than serfs, also suffered, especially if they

[248] Alexander Etkind, "Orientalism Reversed…" p. 618

refused to convert. This is not to say that the Russian peasants did not suffer or suffered less than indigenous peoples, but rather that both the peasants and indigenous peoples suffered, and it is of no use to compare the sufferings with each other, as they were largely different and occurred under different circumstances and through different mechanisms (there was no racism involved in self-colonisation), although the same empire was the culprit.

It has often been claimed that Fliagin encapsulates the true Russian spirit, and he has often been celebrated for his authentic Russianness. Recently, V. G. Mekhtiev argued that Fliagin is "an artistic development of the features of Maxim Maximych, opening up a further path to comprehending the Russian national character."[249] This can only be true of Fliagin, if one considers the Fliagin who narrates the story, that is the pious monk on the boat, and not the Fliagin he narrates about. Fliagin's irrational and violent tendencies are not traits we can attribute to Maxim Maximych who is largely an inactive observer. A reason for the celebration of Fliagin and Maxim Maximych could be, however, that they both either successfully served the Russian state, or, as in Fliagin's case, expressed a desire to do so. Russia in the nineteenth century was a country in which it was not acceptable to refuse to serve the state. This practise had its roots in Peter I's introduction of the service state and was related to the Table of Ranks, which stipulated that merit in one's service of the state should be rewarded with promotions. Both Fliagin and Maxim Maximych conform to this ideal and they are therefore celebrated for their conformity, both in contemporary criticism and more recent Russian readings, as we saw in the case of Mekhtiev's characterisation of Fliagin in comparison with Maxim Maximych. Hence, it was Fliagin's desire to make himself useful for Russia, which made sure that he has evaded the stamp of superfluity even though he was unable to fulfil his desire to die for his country due to the monk's interdiction, but also partly due to the nature of the Russian Empire.

The irrational and violent Fliagin is much more similar to Pechorin, with whom he shares many traits. They both exhibit characteristics of colonisers by speaking of non-Russian peoples in derogatory terms and using colonial discourse as a justification for the subjugation of them. Simultaneously, they are also both colonised, albeit in very different ways, given that Pechorin has never been enserfed, but is rather the victim of a petty self-colonisation (see Chapter II). As Fliagin steps out of serfdom (and effectively also out of childhood), he emerges as a coloniser which is expressed quite clearly in his derogatory use of language about his stay in the desert. Although

[249] V. G. Mekhtiev, "'Geroi nashego vremeni' kak 'arkhetip' siuzheta i obrazov v 'Ocharovannom stranike,'" *Nauchnii*, no. 5 (2021), p. 234

Pechorin and Fliagin are of different social positions, Fliagin's rise through the ranks equalises the difference between them.

Furthermore, on his journey toward getting a passport, Fliagin is often bored and stir up drama for his own amusement, much like Pechorin. Fliagin initiates a fight with an army officer: "I look at the visitor and think: 'It would be an excellent thing to have some fun with him out of boredom.' And I decided that the moment he said so much as a word to me, I'd be as rude as possible to him, and maybe, God willing, we'd have the satisfaction of a good fight. That, I exulted, would be wonderful…"[250] And when the whip fight in the desert ends, he thinks to himself: "it's over now, and thoughts about my situation will start coming into my head again."[251] Like Pechorin, Fliagin uses these episodes of violent amusement as a form of escapism. They have both realised the hopelessness of their situations and use violence and drama as ways for them to forget about their predicaments. In this sense, they both emerge as superfluous hybrids: their situations are rooted in the Russian Empire, and they are both simultaneously colonisers and colonised, self and other, but have no way of resolving their issues.

The paradoxical nature of being both coloniser and colonised is quite clear, but the contradictory nature of Fliagin's character and attitude toward the empire is striking. While Pechorin rebelled against the *beau monde* in Piatigorsk as a reaction against the strict rules of etiquette, Fliagin is an indirect proponent of the policies of the Russian state, even though he belongs to a group that is continuously colonised and subjugated by the very same state authority. In this way, Fliagin is an expression of the 'Russian paradox' in which the core of the Empire was viewed as dramatically different to the periphery, even though in official policy, there was no distinction between the core of the Empire and the more recently conquered territories. Fliagin expresses this difference himself, when he is in the desert and claims he wants to go home to Russia, meaning Central Russia, rather than peripheral Russia. This was simultaneously a society in which intellectuals argued for the improvement of conditions of the country's peasantry, who largely lived in Central Russia, but chose to ignore the subjugation of indigenous peoples living in the periphery of the Empire, which they even sought to justify through discourse.

In this way, *The Enchanted Wanderer* with its ambiguous representation of empire and its mix of realism and folklore becomes a parable for the 'Russian paradox.' That Fliagin emerges as something in-between superfluity and newness shows the double-sidedness of his character, and only

[250] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer…* p. 133-134; Leskov, *Sochineniia…* p. 560
[251] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer…* p. 144; Leskov, *Sochineniia…* p. 571

in this way could one imagine a character who is an expression of the offence taken in large parts of Russian society at the oppression of the nation's peasants. However, it is this same character who simultaneously justifies the oppression of the peoples living on the periphery of that same empire. Leskov chose to represent these issues neutrally, and it is not clear what his intention was with this representation as no judgement is passed in his novella. However, this work remains an astute observation of Russian identity in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Russia's future was debated in literary and intellectual circles and answers were often rooted in either socialism or conservatism. Leskov chose to create a veiled critique of the Orthodox Church instead (placing himself, his work, and his protagonist in the in-between), and thereby exposing the paradox of the Russian intelligentsia who argued against the suppression of serfs at the core of the Empire whilst remaining indifferent to the suffering of indigenous peoples in the Empire's periphery.

In the next chapter, we shall see how this tendency continues in Belyi's modernist novel, *Petersburg*, which takes the reader to the very core of the Empire. In the capital, surprisingly, the streets are covered in Manchurian hats, a reference to the Russo-Japanese war. By mimicking imperial decrees, Belyi uses the symbol of these hats to orientalise the Russian workers, the proletarians, to warn the Russian people of revolution. Belyi portrays a decaying empire on its last legs, but most importantly the narrative voice constantly portrays Russian people with references to the Far East. Belyi's representation of St. Petersburg culminates in a merge between the perceived centre and periphery – the conclusion to a development that had been ongoing since Radishchev's Orientalisation of the Russian centre.

Chapter IV
Re-Centering the 'Petersburg Text':
The Synthesis of Centre and Periphery in *Petersburg*

From murky wood and marshy fen,
A city grew in pride and splendour.
Where once the godforsaken Finn,
Pathetic, nature's poor relation,
Alone beside the water's brim
Cast weathered nets in desolation.[252]

Alexandr Pushkin, 1833

When Russia conquered the Neva Delta on the coast of the Baltic Sea from Sweden in 1703 during the Great Northern War (1700-21), Peter I ordered the construction of a fortress against the Swedes, the famous Peter and Paul Fortress. However, Peter had bigger plans: "Here shall be a town,"[253] he is said to have declared. St. Petersburg has since become known as the 'window to the West,' and the 'Venice of the North.' These labels form part of the potent mythology that has grown around the city and its founding.[254] For instance, Solomon Volkov notes the myth that an eagle appeared over Peter's head, just as it had over Constantine's when he founded Constantinople,[255] while Arthur L. George notes the myth that a giant built the city in the palm of his hand and lowered it onto the ground.[256] These myths serve a dual purpose: they elevate Peter I to deity, while arguing that civilisation and enlightenment was brought to an area devoid of such things, as Pushkin's introduction to *The Bronze Horseman*, quoted above, suggests. The implications of these myths play into the narrative of self-colonisation since civilisation and enlightenment were not brought to the "godforsaken Finn," but rather to the Russian people by their imperial ruler.

Culturally, St. Petersburg has long served as a symbol of the ambiguity of Russian identity. Iurii Lotman notes how Petersburg culture was created through the opposition between the

---

[252] Alexander Pushkin, "St. Petersburg: Introduction to *The Bronze Horseman,*" translated by Carleton Copeland, in Roger Clarke (ed.) *Lyrics Volume IV* (London: Alma Classics, 2022), pp. 212-213

[253] S. Soloviev, *Istoriia Rossii ot drevneishikh vremen*, 29 vols. (Moscow, 1864-79), vol. 14, p. 1270, quoted in Orlando Figes, *Natasha's Dance* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 4

[254] For the myths of Peter I's creation in the early 1700s, see Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 210

[255] Solomon Volkov, *St. Petersburg: A Cultural History* (London, Auckland, Melbourne, Singapore, and Toronto: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1996), p. 7

[256] Arthur L. George, *St. Petersburg: Russia's Window to the Future* (Lanham, New York, and Oxford: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2003), p. 1

Westernisers and Slavophiles.[257] That is, St. Petersburg represents the ambiguity of Russian identity, a representation which Russian literature played a crucial part in constructing. Vladimir Toporov has argued for the existence of a literary *topos* called the 'Petersburg text.'[258] The 'Petersburg text' was created by the city's authors mainly during the imperial era and builds on the myths of folkloric nature such as the ones presented above. Furthermore, Julie Buckler argues that St. Petersburg "*wrote* itself into existence,"[259] through the 'Petersburg text,' highlighting the significance of the written word in the construction of the city in the imagination of the reading public. The ambiguities represented in imperial-era St. Petersburg literature, reflect the contradictory tensions inherent to the Empire itself. In this chapter, these are exemplified by Belyi's creation of the dichotomy between the mainland, ruled by order, and Vasilevskii Island, ruled by chaos. This dichotomy will be analysed according to the opposition between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, but also according to discourses of Orientalism.

Lounsbery also notes an ambiguity in the representation of the imperial capital by arguing that St. Petersburg is an "illusory centre" and noting "[provinciality] as an epiphenomenon of Petersburg."[260] That is, while St. Petersburg is created as a centre, it creates the provinciality of everything outside of it. As the main subject of this chapter is Belyi's *Petersburg* (*Peterburg*, 1913-16), a work of modernist fiction which is normally seen in relation to the 'Petersburg text,' in this chapter I will present an interpretation of this work which is primarily centred on the periphery. Such an interpretation is based on a reading which subverts traditional interpretations by taking the periphery into consideration, meaning that it will show how characters, items, and events that relate to the Russian Empire's periphery affect events in the narrative of the novel. It will be argued that the centre is haunted by the periphery in Belyi's representation, whilst it at the same time is constituted by it. This idea plays on philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte's (1762-1814) dialectic formed by the triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Here, the synthesis is created by two contradictory objects: the thesis and antithesis.[261] Interpreting St. Petersburg in such a way one could argue that it was constituted by an idea of Western cultural advance (the thesis), faced with its antithesis (Slavophilia,

[257] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind…* p. 198
[258] V. N. Toporov, "Peterburg i 'Peterburgskii tekst' Russkoi literatury" in Toporov, *Peterburgskii tekst Russkoi literatury* (Saint Petersburg: *Iskusstvo SPB*, 2003), pp. 7-118
[259] Julie A. Buckler, *Mapping St. Petersburg: Imperial Text and Cityshape* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 1 [original emphasis]
[260] Anne Lounsbery, *Life is Elsewhere…* pp. 9-11
[261] See Christian Klotz, "Fichte's Explanation of the Dynamic Structure of Consciousness in the 1794–95 *Wissenschaftslehre*" in David James & Günther Zöller (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 72-73

the East) and what emerged from this was that Russian culture manifest itself through both Western and Eastern cultural influences (synthesis). As such, this builds on the interpretation of the founding of St. Petersburg, which sees the Neva Delta as part of the Russian periphery, which was in turn constructed by the imperial discourse to create it as the centre of the Russian Empire.

This chapter begins with the history of the founding of St. Petersburg. When viewed from the theoretical and methodological perspective of postcolonial theory, I will contend that the myths about its founding demonstrate the emergence of a Foucauldian 'regime of truth'[262] in Russian society which constituted an integral part of the self-colonisation process in the Russian Empire. Such an interpretation of these myths results in the necessity of a reconsideration of the 'Petersburg text' which constitutes a major contribution to the 'greater myth' of St. Petersburg. This chapter, furthermore, examines how the 'East' is (mis-)used by the narrative voice in *Petersburg* to warn the reader of the coming collapse of the Russian Empire. It opens by deconstructing the creation myth of St. Petersburg and its perceived status as a 'Russian' city, revealing instead that the foundation of the city was in fact an act of colonisation. That is, St. Petersburg was established in peripheral lands that belonged to someone else and had no close ties with Muscovy. It does so by analysing the discourse through which the city was created using Said's theoretical approach from his work *Orientalism*, which reveals the imagined borders between the self and the other, 'civility' and 'barbarity,' 'order' and 'chaos.'

Subsequently, the chapter will examine the 'Petersburg text' and show how Belyi's work brings the periphery to St. Petersburg, which merits a reading of his work through the scope of empire rather than the traditional analyses of his work through the literary *topoi* connected with the 'Petersburg text.'[263] The narrative of Belyi's novel is structured in a way which first builds up dichotomies (namely between Dionysian chaos and the Apollonian order, effectively representing the dichotomy between Orient and Occident) before letting one infiltrate the other. That is, the borders separating the Apollonian and Dionysian constructed by the narrative representation of St. Petersburg slowly vanish before East and West synthesise into one, creating a sense of utter chaos.

---

[262] See Michel Foucault, "The Political Function of the Intellectual," *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 17 (Summer 1977), pp. 12-14

[263] For readings that relate Belyi's novel to the 'Petersburg text' see for instance: Caryl Emerson, "Symbolist and Modernist World-Building: Three Cities, Three Novels and the Devil," in *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 179-183; Taras Koznarsky, "*Petersburg* and Urbanism in the Modernist Novel" in Leonid Livak (ed.), *A Reader's Guide to Andrei Bely's Petersburg* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), pp. 206-211

Building on this point, the chapter will examine the discourse with which Belyi's narrator represents the people from Vasilevskii Island (the construction of dichotomy), especially focusing on 'the stranger,' Dudkin, who emerges as an othered self. In Chapter Two of the novel, Dudkin infiltrates senator Ableukhov's home, leaving a trail of cigarette ash everywhere he goes, and hands his son, Nikolai Apollonovich, a package containing a bomb disguised as a sardine tin, meant to kill the senator. This scene signifies the commenced synthesis of the Apollonian and Dionysian worlds. After having characterised the self-Orientalist discourse with which Dudkin is represented, the chapter will examine the splitting condition of Nikolai Apollonovich focusing on his relationship with his father, Apollon Apollonovich, as it is represented in Chapters Four and Five of the novel. It argues that Nikolai represents both the Apollonian and Dionysian as he synthesises with his father, accentuating Russia's blend of East and West. The synthesis between East and West effectively shows how the events of *Petersburg* are affected by developments in the periphery making the Russian Empire equal to St. Petersburg and making the city the materialisation of Russian self-othering discourses.

Creating Something out of Nothing: The Genesis of St. Petersburg

As others have shown, St. Petersburg was built in an effort to emulate existing cultural paradigms in Europe by exploiting the cheap labour force that Russia's serfs constituted.[264] The many myths and clichéd phrases surrounding the myth of St. Petersburg, like 'window to Europe' and 'Venice of the North,' recur in texts, both fiction and non-fiction, written about Russia's imperial capital.[265] Indeed, Peter did draw inspiration for his reforms from his travels in Western Europe, but he never went to Venice. As Maria Di Salvo assesses, Italian visitors to Russia's new capital found no association with Venice in St. Petersburg, but rather compared it to Rome. St. Petersburg as the 'Venice of the North' was presumably adopted to underscore Russia's newfound status as a seafaring nation, as well as to attract the cultural elite from Moscow and elsewhere in Europe, Di Salvo argues.[266]

Nonetheless, it was a Venetian, Francesco Algarotti (1712-64), who allegedly first used the phrase 'Window to the West' in relation to St. Petersburg. Today a cliché, but in the early days of Petersburgian history, it was a very useful phrase for the newly established Russian Empire, as it underlined the intentions with Peter's city and the establishment of Russia as an empire: to bring

[264] See for instance: Hosking, *Russia…* pp. 85-88; Hughes, *Russia in the Age…* pp. 210-11

[265] For the myth of St. Petersburg, see for instance: Rolf Hellebust, "The Real St. Petersburg," *The Russian Review*, vol. 62, no. 4 (Oct. 2003), pp. 495-507; Hubertus F. Jahn, "Myths, Urban Folklore and Local Identity in St. Petersburg," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol. 46 (2012), pp. 388-403.

[266] Di Salvo, "A Venice of the North?" pp. 71-79

European culture and the Enlightenment to the 'backward' Russian nation. This 'myth' that Russia was inscribed into European culture, was not in accordance with how Algarotti's fellow Italian visitor to the city, Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803), saw the people of St. Petersburg: in 1770, he called the city an "Asiatic encampment (…) with Barbarians disguised in European attire."[267]

The harshest discrediting of the Petersburg myths, however, is found amongst the Russians themselves, which is particularly evident in Pushkin's narrative poem, *The Bronze Horseman*. This poem subtly shows how St. Petersburg was created, not as a 'window to the West' or 'Venice of the North,' but rather as a site of cruel despotism. The poem shows the little man hero, Evgenii, who is engrieved about the death of his fiancée in a flood. The city built on marshlands repeatedly flooded, and Evgenii therefore blames the city's creator, Peter I, and goes to curse at the famous statue of him looking over the Neva River. The Bronze Horseman then comes to life, and chases Evgenii to his death. By having a symbol of the city kill one of its inhabitants because he cursed at the symbol, Pushkin deconstructs the official myth of St. Petersburg as a site of enlightenment. Instead, the capital emerges as a symbol of the autocrat forcing through his will at the expense of the Russian people.

What lies in the background of these myths, that St. Petersburg was a site of enlightenment and cultural advance, is the idea of the Neva Delta as a 'virgin' or 'empty' land (*tabula rasa*). As an example of the misconception of the Neva Delta as *tabula rasa*, the French philosopher and dramatist, Voltaire, who was commissioned in 1757 by Empress Elizabeth I (ruled 1741-62) to produce a history of her father, Peter I, wrote:

> They began by building a small fort upon one of the islands, which is now in the centre of the city. The Swedes beheld, without apprehension, a settlement in the midst of a morass, and inaccessible to vessels of burden; but, in a very short time, they saw the fortifications advanced, a town raised, and the little island of Cronstadt, situated over against it, changed, in 1704, into an impregnable fortress, under the cannon of which even the largest fleets may ride in safety.[268]

Voltaire never mentions the peoples previously living in the area around the mouth of the Neva but focuses instead on the fantastically rapid creation of a grand fortress out of nothing. A century later, in 1870, the American biographer, Jacob Abbott, wrote about the foundation of St. Petersburg in a similar vein:

---

[267] Quoted in Di Salvo, "A Venice of the North?" pp. 74-75

[268] Voltaire, *The History of Peter the Great* (Manchester: Samuel Johnson & Son, 1845. Translated by Tobias Smollett), p. 136

> There was no town on the spot at the time of Peter's visit to it, but only a few fishermen's huts near the outlet of the river, and the ruins of an old fort a few miles above. Peter examined the whole region with great care, and came decidedly to the conclusion that he would make the spot the site of a great city.[269]

In reality, the land on which the city was founded was colonised by Sweden until they lost their fortress, *Nyenskans* (*Nienshants* in Russian) in 1702. This fortress sheltered ca. 4000 people, with additional settlements nearby.[270] In the Kyivan Rus-era the Neva Delta belonged to the Novgorodian Principality, and before that, Finno-Ugric peoples resided in the area. Nevertheless, it was proclaimed that the land had no inhabitants, which was entirely false. The people living in the land never had any close ties with Muscovy. However, a way of solidifying the connection between St. Petersburg and the supposed first Russian state, Rus, and thereby constructing the land as 'Russian,' manifested itself through the historian Sergei Solovev (1820-79) who claimed that Rurik, the first ruler of Rus, had arrived from Scandinavia at the future site of St. Petersburg in the ninth century.[271] This was highly speculative, and as Etkind argues, the Neva Delta was foreign land to the Muscovites.[272]

The view of the Neva Delta as *tabula rasa* was not unique to the case of St. Petersburg. It is a common narrative in colonial instances used to justify taking over territory and subjugating peoples already living there to an inferior status through a racist discourse describing indigenous populations as 'subhuman' or 'uncivilised,' or simply ignoring them altogether. As Iurii Lotman writes about the foundation of St. Petersburg: "the existentialist code is activated: what already exists is declared to be non-existent, and what has yet to appear is declared to be the only thing to exist."[273] It thus resembles the mechanisms of Orientalism as described by Said in his pivotal work:

> …anyone employing Orientalism, which is the habit for dealing with questions, objects, qualities, and regions deemed Oriental, will designate, name, point to, fix what he is talking or thinking about with a word or phrase, which then is considered either to have acquired, or more simply to be, reality."[274]

[269] Jacob Abbott, *Peter the Great* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1902), ch. XI
[270] Paul Keenan, *Creating a 'Public' in St. Petersburg, 1703-1761* (Dissertation, University College London, 2013), p. 44
[271] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 59.
[272] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 65
[273] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind…* p. 192
[274] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 72

All of this happens through both deconstructive and constructive use of language. First, the discourse destroys what used to be there, then it builds an imaginary reality of what could be or could have been there. This is what happened with the foundation of St. Petersburg as well. Peoples already living in the area and their customs were ignored, while the city was constructed both physically and through discourse as the symbol of Russia's ties with Europe and a sign of the modernisation that Peter I forced through.

The idea of *tabula rasa* was also applied in the Russian colonisation of Central Asian lands in the 1860s. Contrary to the Neva Delta, however, the Central Asian lands were seen as "a place to visit and to observe, not to stay,"[275] as Jennifer Keating writes. Furthermore, as the nineteenth century was coming to an end, the racist theory of Aryanism was applied to the conquest of Central Asia. Viewing the Tajik people as Aryans helped Russian authorities justify the conquest of Central Asia, since by using this rhetoric, the conquest became a liberation of a 'brother people' from the 'yoke of barbarism.'[276] The construction of St. Petersburg differs from the colonisation of Central Asia in that the people who were targeted for civilisation and enlightenment through the cultural policies that the city embodied were the Russian people themselves, thereby ignoring the indigenous populations.

This is where the conquest of the Neva Delta and the subsequent foundation of St. Petersburg differ from Russia's other colonial expansions. Naturally, the circumstances were different, since Russia took the Neva Delta from another colonial power, Sweden. The Swedes were pushed out; the indigenous Finno-Ugric peoples who remained were not viewed as 'brother people' but largely ignored, as the discourse of *tabula rasa* shows. Simultaneously, however, Russians of every class were forced to move there either to be subjugated to horrible work conditions, as in the case of peasant workers, or to be given the 'benefits' of Western civilisation in Russia's new capital.

The construction of St. Petersburg, both the literal and the discursive, was effectively the creation of a centre in the periphery. Such an oxymoronic undertaking naturally requires thorough justification, and discourse ensured that the new capital was seen as a site of enlightenment, whereas everything else outside of St. Petersburg was deemed a site of 'backwardness,' exemplified by the representation of Russia's massive peasant population deemed unfit for Europeanisation (see Chapter I). Although the Russian case is markedly different from the colonial instances that Said studied, we

[275] See Jennifer Keating, "Amid the Horrors of Nature: 'Dead' Environments at the Margins of the Russian Empire" in C. J. Campbell, A. Giovine and J. Keating (eds.), *Empty Spaces: Perspectives on Emptiness in Modern History* (London: Unversity of London Press, 2019), p. 38

[276] Alexander Morrison, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia: A Study in Imperial Expansion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 481. In Brockhaus and Efron's encyclopaedia Tajiks are indeed labelled as a people of Aryan origin. See "Tadzhiki" in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgausa i Efrona*.

once more see resemblances with his work on *Orientalism*: "It is perfectly possible to argue," Said writes…

> …that some distinctive objects are made by the mind, and that these objects, while appearing to exist objectively, have only a fictional reality. A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call 'the land of the barbarians.' In other words, this universal practise of designating on one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs' is a way of making geographical distinctions that *can be* entirely arbitrary.[277]

In most colonial instances these boundaries would be the borders of the colonising nation-state, but in this instance, they became the city limits of St. Petersburg. Just beyond these borders millions of serfs resided and worked themselves bloody to satisfy their master's needs under the threat of corporeal punishment. The serfs were constructed as 'other,' which justified the exploitation of them by the urban elite whose bellies were kept full and whose houses in the new capital were built by the suffering serfs. The border between the metropole and countryside was what enabled the peasants to be created as 'unenlightened' and 'backward' and hence the city itself took part in the justification of the institution of serfdom. Furthermore, it deconstructed everything in existence before the city's establishment, underscoring the establishment of St. Petersburg as a colonialist undertaking.

St. Petersburg was created to be the metropole of an empire, a hub of civilisation, trade, and cultural exchange with nearby Western Europe; implicitly, therefore, the construction of the city proclaimed everything outside of St. Petersburg within Russia to be uncivilised and barbaric. In reality, as we have seen, the city was built in land on the periphery of the country that was originally inhabited by peoples without ties to Muscovy; what was effectively a colony was then named the centre of the Russian Empire. St. Petersburg is in this view a physical manifestation of the nature of the Russian Empire with the expansion of its borders taking over new lands and its subsequent internal- and self-colonisation. After conquering the Neva Delta, Russia activated its customary machinery that it had also used in its eastward and southward expansions, subjugating indigenous populations to their rule and transporting serfs to the newly acquired area.

In 1706, 30,000 peasant workers were ordered to the new capital and 40,000 the following year. The displacement of people to the capital was annual and seasonal (due to the harsh Petersburg

[277] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 54 [original emphasis]

winters),[278] but far fewer than intended made it to the construction site. Armed guards were introduced to prevent people from deserting their jobs,[279] but even so, and especially because of the high mortality rates among workers, the need for additional workers to be brought to the capital was constant in the early years of building the capital. Each worker was conscripted to 3 months of work from sunrise to sunset and was paid one rouble per month.[280] The estimates of how many workers died during the construction of St. Petersburg vary greatly; the Danish envoy to St. Petersburg, Just Juel (1664-1715), reported in 1710 that 60,000 workers had perished from hunger or exhaustion, or had simply frozen to death while working on the construction of St. Petersburg. Additionally, Juel reports that 40,000 had died during the construction of Kronstadt.[281] Scholars who refer to Sergei Luppov's *The History of the Construction of Petersburg* (*Istoriia stroitelstva Peterburga*, 1957) categorise Juel's numbers as wild overestimates.[282] Hans Bagger attributes the use of Juel's and similar reports from contemporary visitors to "socially indignant Historians,"[283] while George claims that "no myths of sensational mortality arose in the many other places in which the same methods were used."[284] However unreliable the numbers are, such claims are at risk of excusing the atrocities committed during the construction of St. Petersburg; the fact of the matter is that people died, when it could have been prevented. Letting the workers, who for the most part were serfs and convicts, die, is a stark expression of the hierarchical nature of Russian society where class determined how much one's life was worth. The lives of serfs and convicts were disposable and at the mercy of their masters and the Tsar.

St. Petersburg was meant to be the symbol of a new and modern Russia and in this sense, it was a physical manifestation of Russian self-colonisation directed at the nation's urban elite, who were also ordered to move to the capital. However, in the eyes of foreign visitors, the city was a physical manifestation of the subjugation of the nation's serfs who died in large numbers building Peter's city. The combination of these two phenomena represents two major avenues through which self-colonisation manifested itself in the construction of the new imperial capital, whose

---

[278] Hughes, *Russia in the Age…* pp. 213-15
[279] Keenan, *Creating a 'Public'…* pp. 49-50
[280] Hans Bagger, "Skt. Petersborgs grundlæggelse og tidlige historie," *Nordisk Østforum*, vol. 1 (2003), p. 15
[281] Just Juel, *En rejse til Rusland under tsar Peter, dagbogsoptegnelser* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske boghandels forlag, 1893), p. 209
[282] See Keenan and Bagger quoted above. See also: Sergei P. Luppov, *Istoriia stroitelstva Peterburga* (Moscow: *Nauka*, 1957), p. 94. Luppov refers to the work of Pyotr Petrov (1827-91), *Istoriia Sankt-Peterburga* from 1883, in which, according to Luppov, it is claimed that in the reports of dead workers, the same surnames appear again and again. Petrov's work is unfortunately not available to me.
[283] Bagger, "Skt. Petersborgs grundlæggelse..." p. 15
[284] George, *St. Petersburg…* p. 36

establishment first and foremost took place in what were peripheral lands, but instead was constructed physically and through discourse as the capital of the Russian Empire.

Bringing the Periphery to *Petersburg*: A Reconsideration of the 'Petersburg Text'

The issues of self-colonisation are prominent in 'Petersburg texts.' Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* is a prime example of this as Evgenii, the poem's hero, revolts against the image of the city's creator, Peter I, as he blames the city for the death of his loved one. Gogol's "The Nose" ("*Nos*," 1836) and "The Overcoat" ("*Shinel',*" 1842) are also good examples of this, although no other poem or prose work comment as clearly as *The Bronze Horseman* on the suffering of the Russian people at the hands of the Empire's autocrat. These texts, along with multiple others taking place in St. Petersburg, represent what Toporov labelled the 'Petersburg text.' The term denotes literary works of poetry and prose that take place in St. Petersburg and follow similar patterns in their representations of the city. Toporov shows how literary works taking place in St. Petersburg are based on the same paradigms and clichés, and thus describe the nature of the city in similar ways.[285] The 'Petersburg text' builds on the myths and legends revolving around the city, especially the apocalyptic anticipation, which many connected with the city, as it was often ravaged by floods, which is also seen in Pushkin's poem.[286] Later in the history of the 'Petersburg text' the apocalyptic anticipation is represented by the bomb ticking and the horns tooting in Belyi's *Petersburg*.

Belyi's work shares further similarities with *The Bronze Horseman*, where the statue comes to life and chases Evgenii. In *Petersburg*, the Bronze Horseman once again comes to life in the form of the Bronze Guest, as we shall see. This also serves as an indication of how the 'Petersburg text' functions: one author creates a work about St. Petersburg and the next one will pick up where the first writer left off, or as Julie Buckler argues, the 'Petersburg text' is a text which makes St. Petersburg "equal to itself, articulating the same things about Petersburg that so many have said before, or by seeking to rupture the closed tautology of Petersburg writing by adding something new."[287]

St. Petersburg was established as a site of enlightenment and civilisation, but this is not how the city is represented in the 'Petersburg text.' In this way, the 'Petersburg text' represents a mythology of St. Petersburg, albeit a vastly different one from the official narrative in which the city was created out of nothing and represents the establishment of the Russian Empire and the modernisation of Russian culture. This section will present readings of some examples of the

[285] Toporov, "Peterburg i 'Peterburgskii tekst'…" p. 9
[286] Toporov, "Peterburg i 'Peterburgskii tekst'…" p. 7
[287] Buckler, *Mapping St. Petersburg…* p. 24

'Petersburg text' focusing on the literary trope of weather phenomena since they represent an important literary *topos* in the 'Petersburg text', before suggesting a reading of Belyi's *Petersburg* which is closer to the theme of empire than to the category of the 'Petersburg text.' This proposal will show how regions considered to be peripheral in the Russian Empire affect the representation of the imperial capital and the characters in the novel. Belyi's novel should be read with much greater consideration to the whole of the Russian Empire, and not just its perceived centre.

The overarching theme of the 'Petersburg text' builds on the creation myth of St. Petersburg in which Peter I is deified as he mastered the elements and defied nature to conceive his greatest masterpiece. The city was plagued by floods because of its geographical location but continuously withstood the threat of water and wind. *The Bronze Horseman* explores the dichotomy between nature and civilisation, and directly refers to how Peter I defied nature when he founded the city in the traditional Petersburg creation myth. Iurii Lotman too describes this part of the myth of St. Petersburg, as he writes of "the doomed city" and the eternal struggle between nature and culture represented in the antithesis between stone (the city) and water (the Neva River). Stone is immobile, while water is mobile, and as water is eternal it will eventually destroy stone, Lotman argues.[288] Adding the element of synthesis to this dialectic, we will arrive at St. Petersburg itself, as the city, sitting on the edge of the world, where nature and artificial creation clash.[289]

In the 'Petersburg text,' weather plays an immensely important role. It not only poses a threat to the city's existence (as in the case of flooding), but it also threatens the characters living in it and sometimes accentuates the tormented minds of the city's literary inhabitants. In Gogol's "The Overcoat," the freezing weather kills Akakii Akakievich as he is left in the snow after a mugging in which his coat is stolen. In Dostoevskii's *The Double* (*Dvoinik*, 1846), Goliadkin, walking through a snowstorm in the streets of St. Petersburg, encounters a man who looks exactly like himself, highlighting his split personality. The chaos of Goliadkin's mind is mirrored in the chaos of the city, Robert Belknap argues.[290] In Dostoevskii's *Crime and Punishment* (*Prestuplenie i nakazanie*, 1866), taking place during summer, Raskol'nikov walks the streets of St. Petersburg in repressive heat underlining his moral scruples about the double murder he has committed.

During the Silver Age (1890~1930) weather was still an important tool of symbolic creation. In Belyi's *Petersburg*, the wind blowing smoke from Vasilevskii Island's many chimneys to the

[288] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind…* p. 193
[289] Lotman, *Universe of the Mind…* p. 191-192
[290] Robert Belknap, "St. Petersburg," in Deborah A. Martinsen and Olga Maiorova (eds.), *Dostoevsky in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 175

mainland of the imperial capital acts as a signal of the coming of revolution. In Alexandr Blok's cycle of poems "The City" (*Gorod*, 1904-08), the fog and smoke of the city work together with the elements (water and wind) to create a sense of impending doom, as Mark D. Steinberg argues.[291] In this sense, Belyi and Blok directly refer to the elements as they were represented in Pushkin's poem. However, now the city itself with its many chimneys and the wind blowing smoke around the city comes to signify degeneration.

Indeed, battling the elements seem to have been an everyday activity for characters in the Petersburg mythology. Since Pushkin, there had been a sense of impending doom in the Petersburg myth, as the city's existence was threatened by nature itself. In *Petersburg*, the narrator's constant references to the "many-chimneyed factories" of Vasilevskii Island creating "billows of grimy mists [and] smoke,"[292] followed by the description of the senator's increasing heart rate to "the point of exploding and bursting into pieces,"[293] signals the senator's fear of the impending downfall of the Russian Empire that the smoke from the factories represents. The narrator even describes St. Petersburg as a "poisoned place, the patch of soot."[294] Additionally, the doom that had been predicted already from the creation of the city, seemed all the more imminent in Silver Age poetry. In Zinaida Gippius' poem "Petersburg" (*Peterburg*, 1909), for instance, Gippius writes of a "cadaverous mist" [*trupnaia mgla*] and a "bronze horse [that] freezes above the snake" [*nad zmeem stynet mednyi kon'*][295] referring to the snake under the hoof of the Bronze Horseman's steed, underscoring that the great symbol of the Russian Empire was not what it used to be. Belyi continues this type of imagery when he describes the statue as "the bronze-headed colossus, that shone an unreflecting green; the moulded face, the wreath, green with time..."[296] underscoring the intertextual references characteristic of 'Petersburg texts.'

The weather as it is represented in the 'Petersburg text' (harsh, unwelcoming, threatening) is not much dissimilar to representations of weather in Orientalist literature and colonial discourse. As Bhabha writes in *The Location of Culture*, "The English weather (…) revives memories of its daemonic double: the heat and dust of India; the dark emptiness of Africa; the tropical chaos that was

---

[291] Mark D. Steinberg, *Petersburg Fin de Siècle* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 29-30
[292] Andrey Bely, *Petersburg*, translated by John Elsworth, (London: Pushkin Press, 2009), p. 32; Andrei Belyi, *Peterburg* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1981), p. 26
[293] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 33; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 26
[294] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 135; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 102
[295] Zinaida Gippius, "*Peterburg*," in Gippius, *Stikhotvoreniia zhivye litsa* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1991) pp. 93-94
[296] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 288; Belyi, *Peterburg*, pp. 214-15

deemed despotic and ungovernable and therefore worthy of the civilizing mission."[297] That is, the weather in colonised regions was often equated with the mentality and culture of the peoples inhabiting them. We have already seen an example of the St. Petersburg weather being equated with the city's inhabitants in Chapter I, which described a scene from Radishchev's *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* in which a sergeant of the local guard during a storm refuses to help crew and passengers on a sinking ship. What is striking in this case is that St. Petersburg was not some unknown far-away land;[298] it was the capital of the Empire. Indeed, the way in which St. Petersburg was represented by many of the contributors to the 'Petersburg text' perpetuates the tendency to Orientalise the Russian centre. However, St. Petersburg was only a perceived centre created in the periphery, which the emperor decided should replace the old capital of Moscow. In the eyes of many of the nation's authors and poets, it seems, St. Petersburg was nothing more than a peripheral and foreign space. At least, many of them represented it as such in their work. Thus, while the 'Petersburg text,' is a conclusively useful lens to examine Belyi's novel through, it fails as a concept to highlight the issues of colonialism and self-Orientalism during Russia's *fin de siècle*.

The novel itself brings the periphery much closer to St. Petersburg in the form of peoples with a distinct 'Eastern' appearance as a reference to Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05). While Belyi reuses many of the thematic devices produced by fellow creators of 'Petersburg texts,' his novel is just as much connected to the theme of empire, as it is to the theme of St. Petersburg as a mythical city. This is not only expressed in the image of the green Bronze Horseman that has succumbed to oxidation and corrosion, but also in the narrator's constant mocking tone, mimicking the imperial decree and warning about the people from Vasilevskii Island in highly Orientalist language:

> O, Russian people, Russian people! Do not let the crowds of slippery shadows come over from the islands! Beware of the islanders! They have the right to settle freely in the Empire: for that purpose black and grey bridges have been thrown across the waters of Lethe to the islands. They ought to be dismantled …
> Too late …[299]

[297] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 243
[298] St. Petersburg is only ca. 710 kilometres (~440 miles) from Moscow, which is ca. 60 kilometres (~37 miles) shorter than the distance from Paris to Marseille.
[299] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 30; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 24. In Greek mythology Lethe is the river of forgetfulness in the Underworld.

As in any other creation of Orientalist literature, the people, inhabiting the geographic location in which it takes place, are presented in highly judgmental and racist language. This is no different in *Petersburg*. The workers in *Petersburg* are generally equipped with stereotypical 'Eastern' attire, which the narrator uses, it seems, to justify the Orientalisation of them and thus merits his repeated warnings about the people from the islands infiltrating the Apollonian order of the mainland. This, however, represents a clear difference from the Orientalist literature studied by Said and his followers. The people living on Vasilevskii Island, are not presented as indigenous, but rather as settlers, invaders. Yet, they infiltrate and threaten the standing Apollonian order and are attributed Dionysian qualities of chaos (in diametrical opposition to the Apollonian order of the Empire) by the narration which displays features of judgmental Orientalism.

The next section will explore the representation of the workers from Vasilevskii Island in more detail. It will focus on the creation of a Bhabhan stereotype in the case of 'the stranger,' Dudkin. The rest of the chapter will show how Belyi's novel relates to the theme of empire, and how the periphery is closely connected with the centre in Belyi's representation of St. Petersburg which, it is argued, merits a reconsideration of Belyi's novel as a 'Petersburg text.'

The Nondescript Stranger of Uncertain Status with the Little Black Moustache: The Stereotype of the Revolutionary Puppet, Alexandr Ivanovich Dudkin

"What is this Russian Empire of ours?" asks Belyi's narrator in the prologue to his novel. The narrator answers his own question by stating that "the Russian Empire is in the first place a geographical unit," before noting that the Russian Empire consists of "first of all – Greater Rus, Lesser Rus, White Rus and Red Rus; secondly – the Georgian, Polish, Kazan and Astrakhan kingdoms; thirdly, it comprises … But – etcetera, etcetera, etcetera."[300] In this way, the narrator highlights the longstanding tradition in Russian discourse to hierarchise between regions and peoples within the Russian sphere; the Russian heartland and ethnic Russians being the highest in this hierarchy. This point is underlined by the narrator not even bothering to name any regions east of Kazan and Astrakhan. As the narrator is sarcastically echoing the imperial decree by addressing his readers "Your Excellencies, your Highnesses, Lords and Ladies, and Citizens!"[301] a clear ambiguity surrounds the narrative voice. It is difficult to pinpoint the intent with the mocking tone of the narrative, and it becomes increasingly more challenging as one reads through the novel.

---

[300] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 11; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 9
[301] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 11; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 9

Throughout *Petersburg*, there is a sense of sarcasm in the narrator's use of language. Furthermore, the narrator uses highly racialised terms, which is surprising given the very few representations of non-Russian peoples in the novel. The novel is profoundly impacted by events in the Far East as it takes place in the autumn of 1905, just after the Russian defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), which indirectly brought about the first Russian revolution in 1905 and led to the creation of the State Duma in 1906. These events are not represented directly, but they are the backdrop which creates the foundation of the novel's events. Emphasising the threat from the East, the workers from Vasilevskii Island fomenting unrest in the capital are equipped with Manchurian headwear, while some of the workers, through racist language are equipped with physical characteristics stereotypically associated with people of East Asian ethnic origin, such as yellow skin and small eyes.

Attitudes toward the East in Russia were complicated and conclusively different from that of other European empires. Russian Orientalists, or 'Orientologists' as Vera Tolz prefers to call them, that is, academic scholars of the so-called 'Orient,' towards the end of the nineteenth century became occupied with deconstructing the dichotomy between East and West in their research. The Russian Orientalists, in short, viewed Russia as a "political and cultural space where there was no boundary between the 'East' and the 'West',"[302] Tolz argues. The works of the Orientalists was read widely among the Russian intellectual and creative elite, and one of their readers was Belyi.[303] The Orientalists were generally critical towards Russia's imperial policies, which were inspired by those of the Western empires and involved so-called civilising missions. The writings of the Orientalists must have influenced Belyi in some way or other, but it is difficult to determine whether he agreed with them. Nevertheless, Belyi created a representation of an empire that finds it difficult, if not impossible, to keep out Eastern influences, which representatives of the state apparatus (Apollon Apollonovich) see as the main threat to the fragile stability of the Russian Empire.

An example of how the 'East' infiltrates the 'West' in Belyi's novel is represented in the character of the revolutionary, Alexandr Ivanovich Dudkin. There is no other character in the novel equipped with more 'names' than him. As any other Russian he has a given name, a patronymic, and a family name, but he is attributed a number of labels that are repeated throughout the novel which creates the sense of a stereotypical creation of the workers from Vasilevskii Island through the use

[302] Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient…* p. 5
[303] Vera Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient…*, p. 50, p. 62.

language akin to Orientalist discourse. In Chapter 2 alone Dudkin is referred to as "the stranger,"[304] "the stranger with the little black moustache,"[305] "The Fugitive, [*Neulovimyi*]"[306] and "the man of uncertain status [*raznochinets*[307]],"[308] while in Chapter 1, before his proper introduction in the novel, he is labelled as "nondescript [*sub'ekt*[309]] ,"[310] "man-in-the-street [*obyvatel'*],"[311] "islander,"[312] and "mysterious stranger"[313] as well as the already mentioned labels from Chapter 2. Dudkin's characterisation is meant to invoke fear in the reader; the tone of the narrative makes it clear that this "man of uncertain status" cannot be trusted and has ulterior motives. Effectively, the narrator's discourse relating to Dudkin creates him as an ambivalent, yet knowable character, through the repetition of the labels, and the recurring mentioning of his moustache.

Briefly, the stereotype, a term which is here used in Bhabha's definition, functions both as "phobia and fetish."[314] The word 'fetish' is to be understood in its Lacanian-Freudian context which stipulates that the fetish is characterised by a lack. Thus, a repertoire of conflictual positions constitutes the stereotype (or colonial subject) in colonial discourse. Since the stereotype is "the site both of fixity and fantasy," Bhabha argues, it cannot take up a discursive position; at the same time, the successful signification of the stereotype requires continual repetition of multiple stereotypes.[315] In this way, the stereotyped individual is subjected to an inferior status and emerges as 'other.' As we have already proved the repetitive nature of Dudkin's labels, we can conclusively state that the narrator of this novel has successfully created a stereotype.

The stereotype is created by colonial discourse to invoke fear and disgust towards a specific people. Normally, these would be people who are indigenous and colonised by an invader. However, in *Petersburg*, the focal point of this discourse is the workers who reside on Vasilevskii Island, who for the most part would be ethnically Russian. Throughout the novel, the narrator creates examples

[304] Bely, *Petersburg*, pp. 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116, 119, 124, 125; Belyi, *Peterburg*, pp. 71, 72, 73, 74, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 93, 94
[305] Bely, *Petersburg*, pp. 93, 94, 95, 96, 107, 109, 112, 114, 118; Belyi, *Peterburg*, pp. 72, 73, 81, 82, 85, 86, 89
[306] Bely, *Petersburg*, pp. 119, 122, 125; Belyi, *Peterburg*, pp. 90, 92, 94
[307] *Raznochinets* was a category of class in Imperial Russia, which in the 19th century mainly referred to educated people of non-noble birth. However, in Brockhaus and Efron's Encyclopaedia from 1890-1907 they write that the term is "of no practical meaning." See "Raznochintsy" in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgausa i Efrona*.
[308] Bely, *Petersburg*, pp. 98, 126; Belyi, *Peterburg*, pp. 74, 95
[309] The Russian word субъект (*sub'ekt*) is an informal term like 'fellow' or 'character,' but is also used in philosophy as reference to the 'self' or 'ego.'
[310] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 22; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 19
[311] Bely, *Petersburg*, pp. 22, 66; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 19, 50, 51
[312] Bely, *Petersburg*, pp. 27, 36; Belyi, *Peterburg* pp. 22, 29
[313] Bely, *Petersburg*, pp. 47, 74; Belyi, *Peterburg*, pp. 36, 56
[314] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 103
[315] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 110

of what I have here termed colonial discourse in line with Homi Bhabha's definition of the concept. For instance:

> The inhabitants of the islands will astound you with some thievish tricks they have; their faces are greener and paler than those of any other earth-born creature; an islander – a man of uncertain status, with a little moustache, perhaps – can squeeze through a keyhole; and before you know it he's touched you for a contribution to the arming of the factory workers; he starts chattering, and whispering, and chuckling: and you give him some money; and then you won't any longer be able to sleep at night; your room will start chattering, and whispering, and chuckling: that's him, an inhabitant of the island – a stranger with a little black moustache, fugitive, invisible, he's not there at all; he's away in the provinces; and just you watch – the distant backwoods, out there in the spaces, will start chattering and chuckling; out there in the distant backwoods – Russia itself will start chattering and roaring.[316]

The narrator creates an image of the workers from Vasilevskii Island, which is highly Orientalist in nature, while noting that these people from the islands are an existential threat to the Russian Empire, that is, to the dominant culture that exists in the metropole. The narrator describes them as green, usually with moustaches to set them apart from the people inhabiting mainland St. Petersburg, where Apollon Apollonovich, a representative of the Russian Empire, lives and works. The fear that the narrator attempts to impose on the reader is further accentuated by the senator's fear when he looks out of the window in his carriage toward the island "where the misty, many-chimneyed distances were so faintly outlined, and from where Vasilevskii Island cast a fearful glance."[317] In this way, the narrator creates Vasilevskii Island, as a Saidian "land of the barbarians" using a form of Orientalist discourse which establishes mainland St. Petersburg as the land of civility and order. The Neva River flowing between these two spaces, then, becomes the border between 'barbarity' and 'civility,' 'chaos' and 'order.' Additionally, the narrator's description of how the workers have infiltrated "the distant backwoods," that is, Russia's massive countryside, establishes the idea that the chaos on Vasilevskii Island that threatens the Apollonian order on the mainland, stems exactly from the Russian periphery.

Petersburg is a novel full of dichotomies. Many scholars have over the years noted the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy which exists in the novel, expressed in its two main characters, Apollon and Nikolai Ableukhov – father and son. Sandra Joy Russell and Robert Mann both argue that the Apollonian and Dionysian elements of the novel are related to the tensions between East and

[316] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 27; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 22
[317] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 23; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 19

West.[318] Sanja Bahun, however, sees the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy expressed in the representation of the city itself:

> The open spaces being the place where multitude reigns, the senator also suffers from agoraphobia: closed rooms (and, by extension, straight lines, cubes, and rectangulars—the Apollonian 'order') soothe him, while open and irregular spaces (and circles, spirals, disarrayed objects—the Dionysian 'disorder') upset him.[319]

By attributing the Dionysian qualities (chaos) to the island and its people, the narrator effectively establishes the dichotomy between the island and the mainland and gives an explanation as to why the senator fears the island. Apollon Apollonovich is agoraphobic and moves around the city by carriage to shield himself from the dangerous world outside. But this agoraphobia stems not only from his fear of the Dionysian but also from his contempt for the workers from the Island. It is in the crowds of the city's Prospects that the people from the Island, visiting the mainland, can be found, and it is here that the Senator sees Dudkin for the very first time: "Apollon Apollonovich caught sight (…) of a pair of wild eyes: (…) the eyes recognised the senator; and recognising him, went wild; (…) they opened wide, they shone, they flashed."[320] The senator's agoraphobia thus comes from his fear of the workers who have infiltrated the Prospects of mainland St. Petersburg. As Peter Barta argues: "Doors in *Petersburg* open onto a hostile world,"[321] and this seems especially true about the senator's experience of the city, as he generally refrains from walking the streets.

Whilst this chapter is mainly concerned with how individual characters are being portrayed by discourse, it remains worth noting how the workers are being represented as a mass. In a scene with a demonstration that turns into a riot in an undefined area of St. Petersburg, the narrator notes:

> There were shaggy Manchurian hats sallying forth on to the street; and the nondescripts and the hats dissolved in the crowd; but the crowd wandered hither and tither with no purpose; the nondescripts and the Manchurian hats, however, walked in one direction – to the gloomy building whose upper storeys still shone crimson; and by that crimson building, gloomy from the sunset, the crowd consisted exclusively of nondescripts and hats…

[318] Sandra Joy Russell, "The City as Dialectic: Andrei Bely's Creative Consciousness, its Nietzschean Influence, and the Urban Centre in Petersburg," *TranscUlturAl*, vol. 1, No. 4 (2011) p. 34 and Robert Mann, "Apollo and Dionysus in Andrei Belyi's Petersburg," *The Russian Review*, vol. 57, no. 4 (Oct. 1998), p. 511

[319] Sanja Bahun, "Andrei Bely and the Spaces of Historical Melancholia," in *Modernism and Melancholia: Writing as Countermourning* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 85-86

[320] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 31; Belyi, *Peterburg* p. 25

[321] Peter I. Barta, *Bely, Joyce and, Döblin: Peripatetics in the City Novel* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996), p. 44

> They pushed and shoved into the doorways – how the pushed, how they shoved! What do you expect? The working man has no time to concern himself with propriety: and there was a bad smell…[322]

Belyi represents the crowds walking down the streets of St. Petersburg as a big mass, but within this mass, in the eyes of the narrator and Apollon Apollonovich, anyone can hide. "[B]owlers, feathers, caps, caps, caps, feathers,"[323] are all the senator sees on the Prospects from his carriage. And as the narrator notes: "There is an infinity in the infinity of receding Prospects with the infinity of intersecting shadows receding into infinity.[324] The image of the infinity of shadows on the infinity of Prospects highlights how terrified the senator is of the outside world. These shadows represent threats, not only to his position and the power and wealth that comes with it, but also to the Empire itself. The senator's agoraphobia, and reluctance to go outside, stems from his fear of losing his position when inevitably the Empire crumbles.

The Manchurian hats that constantly appear in representations of the mass of workers is a reference to the Russo-Japanese War that had been fought thousands of kilometres away from St. Petersburg. A. V. Dmitriev and I. E. Zadorozhniuk argue that these hats signify soldiers who want to take revenge against their own country,[325] repeating the aftermaths of previous wars after which the conditions of life among Russian peasants had been up for discussion. After the Russian victory in the Napoleonic Wars, the discussion of serfdom was accelerated, while the loss in the Crimean War (1853-56) contributed greatly to the eventual abolishment of the institution in 1861. Now in 1905, however, it was the poor conditions of the workers in urban Russia that led to unrest. While *Petersburg* does not offer any direct representations of the historical events taking place right under the noses of its characters, the constant references to worker-unrest and the threat posed by people and items with a distinct East Asian appearance, place these events at the centre of the novel's action. It is the scale with which the senator sees the Manchurian caps on the prospects of St. Petersburg, which creates the senator's fear. However, this is also the first indication of 'collective superfluity' which will be examined in Chapter VI. Here, in the case of the St. Petersburg workers, it is not so evident that they would be superfluous, namely because the workers the reader meets, are vigorous and fighting a battle for change. However, they would be superfluous as individuals, while the representation of them as a mass, ensures they can be portrayed as a threat. The same is true of the

[322] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 129; Belyi, *Peterburg* p. 97
[323] Bely, *Petersburg*, pp. 27, 31; Belyi, *Peterburg* pp. 22, 25
[324] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 27; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 22
[325] A. V. Dmitriev and I. E. Zadorozhniuk, *"Sotsiogenez provokatsii i psikhoportret provokatora. (Istoriosofskie providchestva Andreya Belogo v romane "Peterburg")*, *Voprosy filosofii*, no 5 (2017), p. 127

collective in Platonov's *The Foundation Pit* where the dekulakised mass at the collective farm, would be superfluous as individuals (see Chapter VI).

Nikolai Stepanovich Lippanchenko, the revolutionary to whom Dudkin answers, is one of the characters who are attributed a distinct East Asian appearance: "…the sly Ukrainian [*khokhol-maloross*] (…) did not look like a Ukrainian at all: he looked more like a mixture of Semite and Mongol; he was both tall and fat; the yellowish face of this gentleman floated unpleasantly in his own chin…"[326] "The sly Ukrainian" is the narrator's preferred characterisation of Lippanchenko, while the colour yellow follows him as well. This is naturally a thoroughly racist discourse which attributes the colour yellow to peoples from East Asia that also signifies, from the narrator's viewpoint, that the radical movement of St. Petersburg has been influenced by the events happening in Manchuria during this time. The revolutionary sentiments, the narrator seems to suggest, come exactly from the perils that many of these workers had experienced in the far East.

The representation of Lippanchenko represents a multi-layered racism: He is Ukrainian, which the narrator relates to slyness; he looks Jewish, and he looks East Asian, according to the narrator. Firstly, the prejudice against peoples close to, but not belonging to, the Russian nation (Ukrainians and Jews) is clear. Secondly, one notes an instance of racism against peoples from the far East, who Russia has a long history of contact with, both through the Mongol Golden Horde who colonised Rus from 1237 to 1480, and later through the expansion of Muscovian territory to the Far East. The juxtaposition of Ukraine with the East indicates that to the narrator, there is no essential difference between the Russian Empire's eastern periphery and its southwestern counterpart. To the narrator, they are essentially the same, and therefore the same level of fear and resentment must be attributed to them.

The colour yellow which follows Lippanchenko is also associated with Dudkin. However, for Dudkin yellow rather invokes both fear and disgust in himself. Even though he is from the island which is continually linked with the East and by extension the colour yellow following the narrator's discourse, he has recurring nightmares where he is "surrounded by terrible faces (most often, for some reason, Tartars, Japanese or oriental persons in general),"[327] and he further admits to Nikolai Apollonovich that "…I despise all words with that 'u' sound, there's something Tartar in them, or Mongol, anyway, eastern. Just listen: '*u*'. No cultured language knows that sound: it's got something

[326] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 84; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 64
[327] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 117; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 88

obtuse in it, cynical, slippery [*sklizkoe*]."[328] That Dudkin connects this sound with East Asia once again accentuates the perceived threat that the East poses to the existing order and shows that Dudkin himself fears revolution. As a convicted fugitive, however, he is pushed toward the revolutionary movement to which he is bound and cannot escape.

When Dudkin arrives at the Ableukhov family home, he leaves an "unpleasant impression"[329] on Nikolai Apollonovich. The narrator, meanwhile, continues to label him a "stranger" even though Nikolai Apollonovich clearly knows Dudkin already. Dudkin has arrived at the Ableukhovian home to deliver a package containing a bomb meant for the assassination of Nikolai Apollonovich's father. While in the Ableukhov house, Dudkin is chain smoking, and a trail of cigarette ash follows him wherever he goes.[330] Smoking becomes a sign of Dudkin's self-inflicted decay as he admits that cigarette smoke contaminates the brain.[331] His decay becomes clearer when the narrator attributes Dudkin a certain green colour, which we know from the description of the Bronze Horseman is the colour of decay.

> …now he paled, turned grey and finally became quite green; his face even took on suddenly a dark-blue shade; probably this last hue depended simply on the atmosphere of the room, which was permeated through with tobacco smoke.[332]

His decay becomes explicit with the description of his clothes. He wears a wet overcoat, a moth-eaten checked suit, and worn-through shoes.[333] Additionally, he admits that his apartment is riddled with woodlice and bedbugs.[334] The moth-eaten clothes along with the woodlice and bedbugs are not just signs of decay, they are also signs of uncleanliness. Leaving behind a trail of grey cigarette ash, Dudkin disturbs the clean order of the Ableukhov home while potentially infesting the senator's chambers with crawling degenerative insects.

Metaphorically, Dudkin's dirty and out-worn clothes signal a threat to the Apollonian order (straight lines of the wooden panels in the Ableukhovian halls). However, considering the green colour of his face saturated with smoke, Dudkin's degeneration becomes the senator's degeneration

---

[328] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 118 [original emphasis]; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 89. In the Russian version Dudkin is talking about the sound the Cyrillic vowel 'ы' is connected with. It is usually latinised with a 'y,' not a 'u.'
[329] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 93; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 71
[330] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 110; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 83
[331] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 96; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 73
[332] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 98; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 74
[333] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 94; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 71
[334] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 109; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 82

too as the house becomes infested with the insects that Dudkin brings with him. The contents of Dudkin's package, which are unknown to the reader (and Nikolai Apollonovich) at this point in the narrative, underline the threat that Dudkin's presence poses to the Apollonian order. He has crossed the bridge from Vasilevskii Island and infiltrated the home of a prominent privy-councillor. Now the decay that follows him will spread to the Ableukhovian house, signalling the impending downfall of the Apollonian order, and by extension the Russian Empire itself.

The discourse used about Dudkin matches the narrator's repetitive warnings about the people from Vasilevskii Island. As with Dudkin who penetrated the Ableukhovian home, the narrator warns how the workers might infiltrate people's homes on the mainland, as he exclaims:

> O, Russian people, Russian people!
> Do not let the crowds of fitful shadows come over from the island: surreptitiously those shadows penetrate into your physical habitation; from there they penetrate into the nooks and crannies of your soul: you become the shadows of swirling, billowing mists: since time immemorial those mists have come flying in from beyond the world's edge: from the leaden expanses of the Baltic with its seething waves; and from time immemorial the thunderous apertures of cannon have stared out into the mist.[335]

The mists that have come in from "beyond the world's edge (…) from time immemorial," or since the time of Peter I, have changed in nature. Before they brought knowledge, enlightenment, and cultural advance, but now they bring with them a destructive force as the mists have been infiltrated with the smoke from the many-chimneyed factories on Vasilevskii Island. Dudkin is, in the narrator's Orientalist discourse, a physical manifestation of the smoke-infested mists. He brings with him the tool with which Nikolai Apollonovich can destroy the epitome of the Russian Empire in the shape of his own father.

Destroying Dichotomies or How the Apollonian and Dionysian Synthesise

The most important scene in Chapter Five of *Petersburg* sees Nikolai Apollonovich, the son of the aging senator, dreaming that he is riding across the steppe with Tamerlane's forces. This scene not only shows how the Russian Empire was manifestly linked with what scholars at the time called the Orient, but also shows the complete synthesis of the Apollonian order and Dionysian disorder that father and son respectively represent. In scholarship, the Apollonian and Dionysian worlds in Belyi's novel are normally treated as diametrical opposites. While most acknowledge that characters move

[335] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 36; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 28

between these worlds, few recognise that these borders are gradually disappearing as the novel progresses.[336] Over the course of the novel (most evidently in Chapter Five), the Apollonian and Dionysian become elements in both Apollon and Nikolai Apollonovich's characters as the Dionysian slowly infiltrates the Apollonian. However, the Apollonian is also infiltrating the Dionysian in Nikolai Apollonovich's character, which makes it possible to talk of a synthesis rather than a breaking down of the Apollonian. This is expressed mainly in Nikolai's dream in which he becomes one with his father who has taken the form of Saturn (god of time) – a reference to Francisco Goya's painting, *Saturn Devouring his Son* (1819-23).[337] This pivotal event effectively deconstructs the border between the Apollonian and Dionysian and signifies the impending doom for the Ableukhovs as well as for the city of St. Peterburg and by extension the Russian Empire. Throughout the novel the Dionysian threat to the Apollonian order becomes more and more critical, and in Chapter Five as Nikolai Apollonovich learns of the contents of Dudkin's package and the intention with which it was handed to him, the Dionysian has finally completely infiltrated the Apollonian order of mainland St. Petersburg. However, this has further implications than spelling doom for the Ableukhovs and the Empire: it accentuates Russian identity as a hybrid resulting from the combination of Western and Eastern influences.

Chapter Four builds up to this event by accentuating the decay of the Russian Empire. It begins with a description of the Summer Garden finished in 1719 by order of Peter I. However, just like the Bronze Horseman gradually succumbing to corrosion with the passing of time, the Summer Garden has in the narrator's description too "been gnawed by the tooth of time."[338] Moreover, the statues on the sides of the garden's paths have been covered by wooden boards to shelter them from the rain and the wind, and resemble coffins.[339] The garden is virtually empty of people, only some lonely pedestrians were walking its paths, while the narrator remembers the past grandeur of this depressing city park. "All that used to be, but now is no more," the narrator remarks,

> …now the paths of the Summer Garden run so sullenly: a black, ferocious flock circled above the roof of Peter's house; its raucous noise and the heavy flapping of its ragged wings were beyond endurance; all at once the ferocious flock descended on the branches.[340]

---

[336] See for instance, Mann, "Apollo and Dionysus…" pp. 507-525; Barta, *Bely, Joyce and, Döblin…* pp. 20-45; Russell, "The City as Dialectic…" pp. 31-46; Bahun, "Andrei Bely…" pp. 70-110
[337] Olga Matich, *Petersburg/Petersburg: Novel and City* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), p. 57
[338] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 190; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 143
[339] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 189; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 142
[340] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 190; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 143

The decay of the Russian Empire is explicit in these passages. The once grand Summer Garden resembles a cemetery, and black birds, presumably crows, circle above the Winter Palace near the Garden.

The decay of the Empire is written on Apollon Apollonovich's face too, when Nikolai Apollonovich unexpectedly sees his father at the masquerade. The senator's face is covered in wrinkles, a sign of old age, but as the narrator through the eyes of the senator's son describes, "[the wrinkles] had worn away his cheeks, forehead, chin, and nose."[341] The decay of the senator is here shown through his worn-away face. Throughout chapters Four and Five, this is further emphasised through the yellow colour of the senator's face[342] and his absent-mindedness. Yellow was in the previous section a reference to East Asia, but here it has a different meaning. It refers to his mind's decay, which is symbolised by the Ableukhovian home being referred to as a "yellow house,"[343] [*zheltyi dom*] which in Russian is a derogatory term for a psychiatric institution, or 'madhouse.'

The yellow colour symbolising decay of the mind was a product of Belyi's era. During the Silver Age (1890~1930) Russian poets often expressed fear of mental degeneration through venereal diseases (like syphilis), best exemplified by Alexandr Blok (1880-1921) the symbolist poet who lived with syphilis from 1898 until his death. In a meeting with Belyi in 1912, Blok allegedly discussed his condition with him.[344] The senator too expresses fear of neurological syphilis when he wonders "he wasn't developing *tabes dorsalis*, surely?"[345] *Tabes dorsalis* is the outcome of syphilis, which damages the brain and can lead to dementia. The home being referred to as a "yellow house," further emphasises the decay of the senator's mind, but the Ableukhovian house has another important resident who also suffers from absent-mindedness.

Apollon Apollonovich's pronounced absent-mindedness has been passed on to his son. When Nikolai Apollonovich accidentally sets off the timer on the bomb disguised as a sardine tin, he wonders to himself: "why was he thinking of extraneous things, he had to think about *that* … Think about what?"[346] He then proceeds to think about religion, forgetting to think about his situation (and the bomb he has just activated), before he eventually falls asleep with his head resting on the sardine

[341] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 213; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 159
[342] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 291; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 217
[343] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 197; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 148
[344] Olga Matich, *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia's Fin de Siecle* (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), p. 106
[345] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 188; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 141
[346] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 314; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 234

tin. Waking up just twenty minutes before it explodes, he winds the bomb up again postponing his own and his father's deaths. The synthesis between the Apollonian and Dionysian becomes more explicit in Chapter Four when Nikolai Apollonovich compares his father with the Bronze Horseman. This establishes the thought in Nikolai's mind that his father and himself are one and the same: "Apollon Apollonovich (…) was himself the impaled knight," he thinks, "the ancient family crest was addressed to all Ableukhovs; he too, Nikolai Apollonovich, was also one impaled – impaled by whom?"[347] The synthesis is further accentuated when the sentence "Apollon Apollonovich might have reminded anyone of his son: most of all he resembled a photograph of his son taken in 1904,"[348] is reversed and becomes: "Nikolai Apollonovich now resembled the senator: most of all he resembled a photograph of the senator taken in 1860."[349]

Prior to this, upon learning who he has been ordered to kill, Nikolai falls into madness. Through hallucination, he sees the figure of the Bronze Horseman in the tavern as Morkovin reveals to Nikolai that he is in the service and knows of his predicament. Morkovin mysteriously tells him that the figure that Nikolai sees is "he who destroys us irrevocably."[350] After leaving the tavern, Nikolai walks to the statue of the Horseman overlooking the Neva, which comes to life and tells him that "I destroy irrevocably." and he wonders to himself: "had he too been visited by a vision?" In a reference to Evgenii running from the Bronze Horseman in Pushkin's poem, Nikolai runs from the statue laughing and screaming "I am destroyed irrevocably …"[351] This scene not only shows the madness of Nikolai Apollonovich, but it also shows him realising what the result of his predicament is. He must kill his father, but by killing his father he will kill himself too. He is destroyed irrevocably, the outcome of which being that the Apollonian and Dionysian has synthesised into one, and the process that began with Dudkin's visit to the yellow house of the Ableukhovs is complete.

The comparison of Apollon and Nikolai Apollonovich is an example of how the narrative of the novel blurs the dichotomy between the Apollonian order of St. Petersburg and by extension the Empire, and the Dionysian world of chaos among the workers on Vasilevskii Island. However, the merge of the Apollonian and Dionysian worlds is also a manifestation of the Russian Empire's ambiguous relationship with the concepts of 'East' and 'West.' During his conversation with Morkovin, Nikolai Apollonovich is referred to simply as Ableukhov,[352] the family's surname which

[347] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 291; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 217
[348] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 308; Belyi, *Peterburg*, pp. 229-230
[349] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 311; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 232
[350] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 286; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 213
[351] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 288; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 215
[352] Bely, *Petersburg*, pp. 272, 273, 274, 277, 283, 285, 290, 291; Belyi, *Peterburg*, pp. 202, 204, 207, 211, 213, 217

references their Kirghiz bloodline, while the senator's 'Eastern qualities' are accentuated in him being likened to a Japanese person.[353] However, the 'Eastern threat' to the existing order is best accentuated in Nikolai's dream when he is sleeping on the bomb disguised as a sardine tin:

> …he was embodied now: in the flesh and blood of the Russian imperial nobility of ancient lineage, with the task of fulfilling an age-old, sacred purpose: to dislodge all foundations; in the degenerate Aryan blood the Ancient Dragon was to flare up and consume everything in its flame; the age-old East was scattering a hail of invisible bombs into our time. Nikolai Apollonovich – the Turanian bomb – was now exploding with delight at the sight of his homeland; on Nikolai Apollonovich's face a forgotten, Mongolian expression appeared; he seemed now to be a mandarin of the Middle Empire, clad in a frock coat for his passage to the West (he was here with a single, top secret mission).[354]

This passage expresses the narrator's (or perhaps Belyi's) fear of the replacement of ethnic Russians in the hierarchy with Asian peoples, but it also expresses that Apollon Apollonovich and his son are manifestations of an empire whose nature is affected by its exchange with both Eastern and Western cultures – and by extension the Ableukhovs' hybrid identity. In his dream, Nikolai sees himself as the son of Saturn (god of time), as Atlas (the titan condemned to carry the sky on his shoulders), as the son of the Emperor of China, and riding with Tamerlane's forces, and then as the son of a Russian nobleman, and then back to the son of Saturn.[355] The dream thus runs in a circle reflecting the multiple sides of Russian identity. It shows the binary characteristics of Nikolai's character as he is Atlas and the son of Saturn, symbols of the cradle of European civilisation (Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire), while simultaneously being the son of the Chinese Emperor and a soldier in Tamerlane's forces, symbolising the 'Eastern' threat to the standing order of the Europeanised Russian Empire.

Eventually, Apollon Apollonovich and his son become one in Nikolai's dream:

> Nikolai Apollonovich's logical premises turned into bones; the syllogisms around these bones wrapped themselves into rigid sinews; the content of his logical activity developed flesh and skin; and so the "self" of Nikolai Apollonovich again displayed bodily form, although it was not a body; and in this *non-body* (in the exploded "self") someone else's "self" was revealed: this "self" had rushed in from Saturn and to Saturn it returned.[356]

---

[353] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 294; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 219
[354] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 317; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 236
[355] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 319-320; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 238
[356] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 320; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 239

Nikolai has thus been devoured by his father in the dream. It then comes to look for Nikolai Apollonovich as though he has been ordered to destroy himself, while the Apollon Apollonovich/Saturn figure destroys himself as he absorbs his son. But Nikolai Apollonovich is first and foremost ordered to destroy the epitome of the Empire as his father is represented as the Empire itself, as an expression of both its centre and periphery:

> At the same time Nikolai Apollonovich was thinking that this slight, five-foot body of his father's, which couldn't be more than a couple of feet in circumference, was the centre and the periphery of a certain immortal centre: that was where, when all was said and done, the "self" was located; and any plank of wood, if it toppled down at the wrong time, could crush that centre: crush it once and for all…"[357]

Apollon Apollonovich and his son represent the Russian self. The self, however, is characterised by its Eastern and Western blend. Russian identity thus has an inherent hybrid quality which is marked, not by being colonised by others, but having been colonised by itself to take on the image of European civilisation. It is the dichotomy between the Apollonian and Dionysian preceding their synthesis with one another that makes this notion possible in the case of the Russian Empire. It was an empire that drew inspiration from the cultures of Western Europe, that created a city to manifest its ties with Western nations and tried to keep the influence from the East out, but failed to do so, since the 'East' was part of its 'self' – exactly as in Belyi's representation. That is, the answer to the narrator's question, "What is this Russian Empire of ours?" is that it is not just an arbitrary geographical unit manifested on maps. It is a geographical unit consisting of numerous cultures and peoples as a result of Muscovy's and the Russian Empire's external colonisation which not only ensured vast lands for the empire, but also absorbed people into the Empire which did not fit the authority's idealised image of 'self.' These peoples were normally considered part of the Russian periphery, but in *Petersburg* the peripheral has very much infiltrated the central and express the fear of not only the Empire crumbling, but also the fear of the destruction of the idealised Russian identity at the hands of ancient Eastern civilisations.

Belyi exposes Russian identity as being both self and other by letting the Dionysian infiltrate the Apollonian. Through the notion of the Dionysian being connected with the Orient, and the Apollonian with the Occident, Belyi effectively represents Russian identity as hybrid. Where the culprit in Radishchev's, Lermontov's and Leskov's representations of self-colonisation was the

[357] Bely, *Petersburg*, p. 299; Belyi, *Peterburg*, p. 223

Empire itself, Belyi represents the workers as the perpetrators. Mimicking imperial discourse, Belyi Orientalises the working class, represents them as dirty, lower rank individuals. This establishes the victimhood of characters like Apollon Apollonovich, while the self-othering discourses directed at the working class, indicates the superfluity of the masses. The narratives examined in Part I, while they take place in different geographic locations, share the image of self-colonisation which ignores the Russian Empire's external colonisation efforts and by extension the suffering of indigenous peoples at the hands of 'their' Empire. Instead, Belyi, Radishchev, Lermontov, and Leskov all use their representations of non-Russian peoples to reflect their characterisations of Russian identity, which is remarkably consistent in Russian imperial-era literature. In the Soviet era, examined in Part II, race played a much smaller part in literature written about Central Russia. Instead, like in Soviet politics, authors were concerned with notions of class, which represents a shift in self-colonisation narratives. With Orthodoxy and nationality removed from the Soviet ideological doctrine, proletarianism emerged as the ideal according to which all Soviet citizens should live. However, as we shall see, self-colonisation was still very much part of official policy and became an important theme in dissident literature as well.

Part II
Othering the Masses: Individuality and Collective Representation in Soviet Era Dissident Literature (1925-1954)

Chapter V
Creating a Human:
The Conflicting Civilising Missions in *A Dog's Heart*

> Explain to me, please, why we need to artificially fabricate Spinozas when any peasant woman can give birth to one whenever!... After all, Mrs. Lomonosov gave birth to her famous son in Kholmogery. Doctor, humanity takes care of this itself, and in the evolutionary process, stubbornly separating out from the mass of all kinds of scum, it creates dozens of geniuses who ornament the globe.[358]

The spectre of tsarism cast its shadow over the newly established Soviet Union as the Bolsheviks, in the early days after the October revolution, enforced a new communist reality. This spectre also casts its shadow over Mikhail Bulgakov's short novella, *A Dog's Heart* (written in 1925, published in the USSR in 1987), in which a professor of eugenics and rejuvenation, Filipp Filippovich Preobrazhenskii (from *preobrazhenie* – transfiguration, transformation), dreaming of the days before the revolution, struggles to keep hold of his seven-room Moscow apartment: the president of the Building Committee, Shvonder, and his crew of devout communists argue that he should share some of his rooms. Meanwhile, the professor carries out a medical experiment on a stray dog, Sharik, replacing the dog's pituitary gland and testicles with human ones. To the professor's surprise the operation turns the dog into a human who takes the name Poligraf Poligrafovich Sharikov and the professor begins the process of teaching the dog-turned-human how to behave and speak properly. The professor is disappointed when Sharikov, whom he sees as his own creation, is drawn to communism and when it begins to look like Sharikov will never become the civilised individual with good table manners he tries to create. When he becomes a threat to the professor's luxurious existence in his seven-room apartment, the professor decides to revert the operation.

A Dog's Heart has often been read as an allegory to the new Bolshevik state that began to take shape in the 1920s.[359] Ronald D. LeBlanc, however, criticises such readings as they, in his view, "tend to overlook a metamorphosis of almost equal significance that occurs earlier in the narrative when Sharik is first taken in off the street by Philipp Philippovich and brought home to live with

[358] Mikhail Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, translated Antonina W. Bouis, (Richmond: Alma Classics, 2016, p. 106; Mikhail Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, vol. 2 (Moscow: *Khudozhestvennaia literatura*, 1989), p. 194

[359] See for instance: Craig Hamilton, "Allegory, Blending, and Censorship in Modern Literature," *JLS*, vol. 40 (2011), pp. 23-42; Solomon Ioffe, "*Tainopis' v Sobachem Serdtse Bulgakova*," *Novii zhurnal*, nos. 168-169 (1987), pp. 260-274; Ellendea Proffer, *Bulgakov: Life and Work* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984), pp. 123-133.

him."[360] The 'metamorphosis' LeBlanc refers to occurs when the narrative changes its focalisation, and Sharik's first-person narrative role is substituted for a third person omniscient narrator. This is a significant shift in the narrative which accentuates how Sharik/Sharikov is being denied the prospect of selfhood, not only by his creators, Preobrazhenskii and his assistant Bormental', but also by the narrative itself.

Other scholars have focused on the theme of transfiguration especially in relation to Soviet era research in eugenics,[361] while some focus on the narrative representation of animals and animal rights in Bulgakov's story.[362] This chapter will create a reading using Gérard Genette's structuralist approach to narratology presented in his work *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*.[363] This reading will focus on the effects of the narrative discourse in the representation of the dog, Sharik, and his human double Sharikov taking into account readings which focus on animal representation in *A Dog's Heart*. This method allows me to present a thorough analysis of the novella's narrative structure, highlighting who is speaking when and through whom the narrative is focalised. The analysis will focus especially on when Sharik/Sharikov is in control of the narrative, and when he is not. This will reveal that Sharik seems more powerful and more defined as an individual when he is a dog, while readers are not allowed entry into his thoughts after he is turned into a human. On a broader level, this will reveal the impact of the civilising missions which Sharikov is being subjected to by the professor and by Shvonder.

The chapter will be split in two parts, the first of which focuses on Sharik/Sharikov's experience and representation by the novella's narrative voice. It is argued that the human-like level of cognition which Sharik is equipped with is diminished by the narrative voice after the professor's experiment, when Sharikov is increasingly portrayed as a monstrous creature. What lies at the heart of Bulgakov's story is not the theme of transfiguration or the allegorical references to the Bolshevik

---

[360] Ronald D. LeBlanc, "Feeding a Poor Dog a Bone: The Quest for Nourishment in Bulgakov's *Sobach'e Serdtse*," *The Russian Review*, vol. 52, no. 1 (Jan. 1993), p. 58

[361] See for instance: Henrietta Mondry, "Transformation narratives: physical, metaphysical, scientific," in Mondry, *Political Animals: Representing Dogs in Modern Russian Culture* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015), pp. 309-362; Eric Laursen, "Bad Words Are Not Allowed!: Language and Transformation in Mikhail Bulgakov's 'Heart of a Dog,'" *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 51, no. 3 (Autumn, 2007), pp. 491-513; Yvonne Howell, "Eugenics, Rejuvenation, and Bulgakov's Journey into the Heart of Dogness," *Slavic Review*, vol. 65, no. 3 (Autumn, 2006), pp. 544-562; Susanne Fusso, "Failures of Transformation in *Sobač'e serdce*," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 33, no. 3 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 386-399.

[362] See for instance: Anastassiya Andrianova, "Narrating Animal Trauma in Bulgakov and Tolstoy," *Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 4 (Nov. 2016), pp. 1-13; Erica Fudge, "At the Heart of the Home: An Animal Reading of Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Heart of a Dog*," *HUMaNIMALIA*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Sep. 2009), pp. 10-23; A.C. Wright, "Animals and Animal Imagery in M. A. Bulgakov," *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, vol. 36, no. 2 (Jan. 1991), pp. 220-228.

[363] See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, translated by Jane E. Lewin, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980)

system, but rather the deprival of the dog-human's search for self-definition. As Sharik/Sharikov's voice disappears from the narrative after the operation, we come to see him only through the eyes of the professor and the employees at his practise, which results in a decidedly judgmental representation.

The second part of the analysis will examine Shvonder's and the professor's attempts to 'civilise' Sharikov. After his transformation, Sharikov is subject both to the professor's efforts to teach him bourgeois table manners and polite language, and to Shvonder's attempts to turn him into a good proletarian. As such, they deprive Sharikov of the chance to define himself, and in the background of this is a characterisation of not only the new Soviet-style mode of self-colonisation, but also to the old regime's values of behaviour and etiquette among the nobility. Before turning to these issues, the chapter will give a brief outline of the new society that the Bolsheviks attempted to create focusing on literature and poetry as well as the 'New Soviet Human [*novii sovetskii chelovek*].' These elements of Bolshevik ideology will be analysed according to the professor's experience of the new reality, to which he finds it very difficult to assimilate, but which simultaneously represent the Soviet mode of self-colonisation.

Replacing 'I' with 'We': The Role of the Self in the Transition to Soviet Self-Colonisation

Etkind's study of Russian internal colonisation, upon which much of this dissertation's theoretical framework is based, focuses almost exclusively on the pre-revolutionary era of Russian history. However, he notes that "[t]otalitarianism, Soviet-style, was a logical result of [the Russian Empire's internal colonisation],"[364] and argues that studying the imperial era can help to understand the Soviet-era atrocities against its own population.[365] Even so, the primary focus of the work is the imperial Era.[366] This might be due to the fact that, as Etkind himself points out, Soviet historians abandoned the idea of self-colonisation because "it did not fit their class approach."[367] The narrative of self-colonisation is indeed based on discrimination between classes, which was highly prevalent in the Russian Empire since Peter I's introduction of the service state and the Table of Ranks. If self-colonisation vanished from Soviet-era research in Russian history, this is not because differences

---

[364] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 24

[365] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 3. See also: Yuri Slezkine, "Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Socialism," *The Russian Review*, vol. 59 (2000), pp. 227-234

[366] In 2001 Etkind published an article entitled "Foucault and the Thesis of Internal Colonisation: A Postcolonial View of the Soviet Past," but despite the title, the article is oddly more concerned with the Russian Imperial Era than it is with the Soviet. See Etkind, *Fuko i tezis vnutrennei kolonizatsii: Postkolonialnii vzgliad na sovetskoe proshloe,*" *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 49 (2001), pp. 50-73

[367] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 71

between classes had disappeared. Rather, as Etkind points out: the estate law, for example, which was abolished in 1917, was later "re-established (…) in the form of 'social origin,' which reversely discriminated against those who originated from the gentry or clergy."[368] Nonetheless, while Etkind recognizes that self-colonisation continued in the Soviet Era, although in different forms, his work does not study how these different forms materialised.

As we shall see over the course of Part II, the core foundation of self-colonisation persisted throughout the Soviet period. However, although the dynamic whereby the state sought to alter the identity of its own people and to subjugate certain social strata to an inferior status continued to play a central role in the Soviet Union, the values which the ideal human should assume changed. Replacing the focus on the individual, which had been the core focus of the imperial era's politics of identity, with a focus on the collective was prevalent in both the urban centres and the countryside of the Soviet Union. As Bulgakov's novella takes place in Moscow, the capital of the Soviet Union, this chapter will focus on the 'New Soviet Human' in an urban setting. The 'New Soviet Human' was defined in the urban centre by the party elite, and, just like other discourses that had originated in the imperial era-centre of St. Petersburg, it emanated and spread throughout the Soviet sphere from this centre. It was in the cities that the growing proletariat resided, but also where the leading cultural figures and political thinkers defined their ideas for the new Bolshevik reality. The 'New Soviet People' became characters in Soviet literature and were depicted in official propaganda, but they also materialised in society through various educational reforms which had the goal of teaching children how to be useful citizens.[369]

The shift from an 'I' to a 'we' was one of the central defining features of the Bolshevik ideology. The Russian revolution signalled the end of private ownership; land was seized from wealthy landowners and middleclass peasants, while large apartments were divided into smaller units with shared facilities to house more families. The authorities saw this as a means to encourage communal lifestyles, as Graeme Gill argues.[370] It was no longer up to individuals to create their own happiness, but rather up to the individual to act in a manner which benefitted the collective. Thus, within this element of Bolshevik ideology, there was still an emphasis on the individual, and as Mark D. Steinberg argues:

---

[368] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* p. 104
[369] Olga S. Porshneva, "Bolshevik Engineering of the "New Man" in the Early Soviet Period: Theoretical Bases, Political and Ideological Priorities, Evolution of Approaches," *RUDN Journal of Russian History*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2019), pp. 69-72
[370] Graeme Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 67

> Even when the focus was on class struggle, the individual stood at the logical centre. Just as personal culture was seen to aid the class struggle, so was class struggle seen as serving the development of the individual self (…). Moral and cultural backwardness was denounced not only in evidence of social oppression or on the pragmatic grounds of the needs of the class struggle, but also as inherent evil, for the harm it inflicted on the individual self.[371]

Even in propaganda posters, single workers were depicted to illustrate the archetype of the proletariat, rather than a group of workers.[372] In this way, Soviet authorities attempted to instil within the Soviet citizens a communal spirit which meant that people were expected to work, not to enrich themselves or to produce goods for themselves, but rather to benefit the collective. This, however, also meant the seizure of property and the end to private ownership. It is the frustration with these dramatic changes that Preobrazhenskii expresses when he goes on a rant about galoshes that disappeared from the lobby of the building in April 1917. "It was done by those songsters!"[373] he exclaims, referring to the proletariat. The galoshes, in this instance, become the symbol of the wealth that he is not willing to give up, and when Bormental' notes that "[the proletariat] doesn't even have any galoshes,"[374] it stresses the meaninglessness of the seizure of property, as it did not even benefit the proletariat as they still found themselves not having any galoshes. The arbitrariness of the seizure of property carried out by the Bolsheviks will be the subject of the next chapter, where we shall see how in rural areas, innocently owning sophisticated agricultural equipment resulted in one being classified as *kulak*,[375] a situation that led to forced displacement or extermination (see Chapter VI).

As any other Soviet citizen, Preobrazhenskii is expected to live according to the Bolshevik dictum of the 'New Soviet Human,' which stipulated what the ideal Soviet citizen should be. The discourse of the 'New Soviet Human' is a prime example of what Louis Althusser would refer to as the 'interpellation of the subject.' In Althusser's argumentation, all ideology shapes and moulds the nature of the subject through the process of interpellation.[376] In much the same way the Bolsheviks created a discourse which ensured the interpellation of the Soviet citizens who were to stand in opposition to the bourgeois and exert proletarian values. The core of the ideology of the new

---

371 Mark D. Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, & the Sacred in Russia, 1910-1925* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 89
372 Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy…* p. 33
373 Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 37; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii…* p. 144
374 Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 37; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii…* p. 144
375 Andrei Suslov, "'*Luchshe peregnut, chem nedognut*': Dekulakization as a Facet of Stalin's Social Revolution (The Case of Perm Region)," *Russian History Review* 78 (July 2019), p. 384
376 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (Notes towards an investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971. Trans. Ben Brewster), pp. 142-176

individual was re-education through propaganda and systematic changes to the educational systems to ensure the continued creation of 'New Soviet People.'[377] The 'New Soviet Human' was to emanate the spirit of revolution and be ready to defend it at all times, and they should adhere to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, which above all prescribed the end to private ownership and the transition to communal principles. Even so, the longstanding subjugation of peasants to an inferior status continued, while the proletariat was depicted as the true defenders of the Bolshevik revolution.

There were changes in cultural production as well, as expressed in the writings of the Proletkul't members. In 1918, one of the leading thinkers of the movement, Alexandr Bogdanov (1873-1928), wrote an article entitled "What is Proletarian Poetry?" (*Chto takoe proletarskaia poeziia?*) in which he argued that the lyrical 'I' should not represent the 'I' of the poet, but rather the 'we' of the collective.[378] The aim of the Proletkul't movement was to turn the proletariat into a critically thinking mass of the revolution. The proletariat should be taught through exposure to artistic production to reject the ideas of the bourgeois regime in pre-revolutionary Russia and become "a weapon in the struggle against the old society from which that culture came,"[379] as James White writes. To that end, Proletkul't, spearheaded by Bogdanov and Anatolii Lunacharskii argued in their writing for the inclusion of collectivist ideals into artistic production. According to Claire Bishop, this meant that artistic production was interpreted on the same lines as industrial production, which led to a new understanding of the artist's role "in which originality was no longer understood to be an independent expression of the artistic subject." Instead, they argued, artistic production should depict characters who actively participated in developing and improving conditions for the collective.[380]

Despite quarrels between Proletkul't and the Communist Party, these principles evolved into the creation of socialist realism in the 1930s. The depiction of the new individual in Soviet literature, which emphasised the 'New Soviet Human's' superiority "to all men that had existed before,"[381] is an expression of the striving for a new biological type of human that existed in the Soviet Union. This discourse had roots in the early days of Russian radicalist writing, the prime example being Chernyshevskii's novel *What's to be Done?*. The search for a superior individual further resulted in

---

[377] Porshneva, "Bolshevik Engineering…" pp. 69-72

[378] A. Bogdanov, "*Chto takoe proletarskaia poeziia?*" *Proletarskaia kul'tura*, no. 1 (July 1918), pp. 12-22

[379] James White, "Proletkult" in White, *Red Hamlet: the Life and Ideas of Alexander Bogdanov* (Leiden and Boston: BRILL, 2018), p. 380

[380] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (New York and London: Verso, 2012), p. 51

[381] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, third edition, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 101

increased research in the field of eugenics. The Soviet eugenics movement, led by Nikolai Koltsov (1872-1940), had as a specific goal to create a superior human type who would aspire to self-sacrifice for the good of the collective.[382] Within the Communist Party, however, many felt that research in eugenics was encumbered by "elitist bias [and was] utterly incompatible with the proclaimed egalitarianism of the Bolshevik state," and was defunded in Stalin's first 5-year plan in 1929, which greatly diminished the autonomy of Soviet educational and research institutions, as Nikolai Krementsov points out.[383] In the 1930s, however, there was a revival in genetic research as the idea of 'socialist eugenics' arose.[384]

In readings of *A Dog's Heart*, eugenics has often been connected to the transformation of Sharik from dog to human. It is easy to find connections between the professor's medical experiments and the Bolshevik agenda of creating a new type of human. However, such a reading seems to forget the fact that the professor is not a supporter of the revolution. "Yes, I don't like the proletariat,"[385] the professor remarks early in the novella. The professor's position is thus ambiguous: on the one hand, he despises the proletariat and the Bolshevik revolution; on the other, he is an expression of the Bolshevik scientific undertakings, which in the early days of the Soviet Union emphasised research in eugenics.[386] The professor's ambivalent position is underscored by scholars' varying characterisations of him. Diana L. Burgin notes "Bulgakov's multi-faceted attitude toward his hero, who serves as an autobiographical spokesman for his political and social satire and as a tragic, Romantic hero in the Frankenstein tradition."[387] The view of the professor as being a spokesperson for Bulgakov's own views is reiterated by Lesley Milne,[388] but more recent scholarship sees the professor in a more negative light, such as Natalia Dame, who notes the professor's "hardhearted and aggressive behaviour towards his creation."[389]

It is not the professor's aim to create a new ideal proletarian, nor was it even his intention to create a human from a dog. The professor is just as surprised as everyone else that Sharik turns into a human, but is even more surprised that his creation, in his eyes, turns out to be so ghastly. The

---

[382] Nikolai Krementsov, "From 'Beastly Philosophy' to Medical Genetics: Eugenics in Russia and the Soviet Union," *Annals of Science*, vol. 68, no. 1 (2011), p. 72
[383] Krementsov, "From 'Beastly Philosophy'…" p. 78, 80-81
[384] Krementsov, "From 'Beastly Philosophy'… p. 85
[385] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 31; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 140
[386] See for instance: Mark B. Adams, "Eugenics in Russia, 1900-1940," in Adams (ed.), *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) pp. 161-182
[387] Diana L. Burgin, "Bulgakov's Early Tragedy of the Scientist-Creator: An Interpretation of *The Heart of a Dog,*" *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 22, no. 4 (Winter, 1978), p. 494
[388] Lesley Milne, *Mikhail Bulgakov: A Critical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 61-62
[389] Natalia Dame, "Why is Sharikov dead? The fate of 'the Soviet Frankenstein' in Bulgakov's *A Dog's Heart*," *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 61, no. 1 (2019), p. 40

professor admits that he has failed and stumbled upon something other than expected. "[T]he pituitary gland [*gipofiz*] is a closed chamber that determines a person's given character. Given! (…) It's the brain itself in miniature!"[390] the professor concludes from his experiment. This means for the professor that whoever his donor to the experiment was, the dog would have taken on their personality, and as such improving the human race through eugenic surgery is impossible, but since he "was concerned with (…) eugenics, improving the human race,"[391] he must conclude that he has failed. This is where the allegorical readings begin. In light of eugenic experiments, it seems that Bulgakov creates a criticism of the Bolshevik creation of the 'New Soviet Human' and suggests that transforming the character of the Soviet people is impossible. As such, Bulgakov seems to predict the failure of the Soviet mode of self-colonisation before it has properly begun. Building on this, however, one could argue that the imperial modes of self-colonisation also failed, which becomes clear when looking through the lens of the multiple alternatives to imperial ideals that existed throughout the imperial era and continually had to be fought, until the Empire itself became too weak to do so.

There is no doubt that it is possible to read the research in eugenics carried out by the professor as an allegory of the Bolsheviks' attempts to transform the Soviet citizen into the 'New Soviet Human.' However, given the professor's nostalgia about the imperial era when his property rights were sacred, I will suggest that the experimental surgery that the professor performs on a stray dog, refers to the idea that the identity of the Russian people remains subject to the authorities' will – a situation that has continued into the Soviet era. In other words, the imperial ideals are still haunting the professor. "After all, it's your own experimental creature," Bormental' remarks to the professor as they contemplate killing Sharikov or reverting the procedure.[392] Thinking of the ways in which the Russian imperial authorities colonised their own population, especially Peter's Europeanisation reforms and the Nationality Doctrine of 1833, it is difficult not to note the similarities in the nature of these policies. That is, the intention with which these policies were implemented were the same: to change the nature of Russian/Soviet identity in accordance with the dominant ideology. Ideological changes are not saved only for revolutions: For Peter I, the dominant ideology was Europeanism, while for Nicholas I (who implemented the Nationality Doctrine) it was Slavophilism. From 1917 onwards it was communism, and while this signified a dramatic change in ideological focus, it resembles the policies of Peter and Nicholas, different though they are. The main difference in these

[390] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 106; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii…* p. 194
[391] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, pp. 106-107; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii…* p. 194
[392] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 107; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii…* p. 195

policies is that while for Peter and Nicholas the emphasis was on the individual and how the individual should design their own lives, for the Bolsheviks the focus was on how the individual could benefit the collective. The overarching focus for the individual 'New Soviet Human' was therefore not on the self, but rather on every Soviet citizen who subscribed to the new ideology. This was the replacement of the 'I' with a 'we,' but those who were deemed not to live according to these ideals would receive a one-way ticket to Siberia (see Chapter VII).

In this sense, when the professor and his assistant contemplate killing Sharikov, there are connections to the Soviet Union's ideology too. Soviet citizens were their specimens, their 'experimental creatures,' and when experiments failed, they had the power to do with them as they pleased. Sharikov, however, suffers a different fate than the many Soviet subjects who were sent to Siberia as he is turned back into a dog. The 'dehumanisation' of Sharikov is prevalent in the narrative of Bulgakov's novella, but ironically Sharikov is attributed more human qualities while he is a dog, whereas the narrative discourse changes when he becomes a human. Sharikov is represented through the focalisation of the professor and his assistant who see a monstrous creature in Sharikov. A monstrous creature, that is, whom they believe they can 'civilise.' In the next section, we shall see how the narrative deprives Sharikov of a voice, before the last section which will focus on how the professor and his opponent, Shvonder, attempt to civilise Sharikov, but end up depriving him of the chance to define himself.

How the Narrative Deprives Sharikov of Selfhood

Through the first-person intradiegetic narration in the opening paragraphs of *A Dog's Heart*, the reader gets some insight into who Sharik is and what he thinks about the world. Viktor Shklovsky argued in his famous text, "Art as Device," that Lev Tolstoi's use of first-person narration from the point of view of an animal in *Kholstomer* (1886) was a method of *ostranenie*, or defamiliarization.[393] However, as some scholars have argued, there is a paradox in creating a narrative from the perspective of an animal. William Nelles, for instance, argues that since animals cannot speak, using first person narrative from the perspective of an animal "pose[s] a problem."[394] Anastassiya Andrianova in turn argues that Bulgakov…:

> …employ[s] a kind of empathic ventriloquism to narrate animal pain, an important project which, however, given the status of both the animal and trauma outside human language, and thus susceptible to being distorted

[393] Viktor Shklovsky, "Art, as Device," translated by Alexandra Berlina, *Poetics Today*, vol. 36, no. 3 (Sep. 2015), p. 163
[394] William Nelles, "Beyond the Bird's Eye: Animal Focalization," *Narrative*, vol. 9, no. 2 (May 2001), p. 188

by it, produces discourse that may not be authentic (animal-like, rather than animal narration) but is, nonetheless, our best shot at addressing the animal in pain."[395]

Sharik's pain is represented in the onomatopoeic line in the very opening of the novella that reads "A OOOOO-OOOW-OOOW! [*U-u-u-u-u-gu-gu-gugu-uu*!]"[396] before the narration dips into the consciousness of the dog. The dog's interjection of pain comes from him being scolded by boiling water poured on him by a cook. "What a creep, and a proletarian to boot! (…) Greedy creature,"[397] Sharik exclaims marking the transition from onomatopoeic speech to human-like speech.

While the narration stays in the intradiegetic first-person narration focalised through Sharik, he reveals the inequalities between people in the early stages of Soviet communism reflected in Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP). Sharik hierarchises between proletarians by stating that street cleaners are the lowest category of proletarians and notes how a typist on a forty-five rouble salary "can't afford to go to The Bar," but has to pay "forty copecks for two courses, while both those courses don't even cost fifteen, because the manager steals the remaining twenty-five copecks."[398] In this way, Sharik exposes the inequality and the corruption that existed in society. Elena Fratto argues that "the dog's estranging glance also serves the purpose of conveying to the reader the atmosphere of decay in NEP-era Moscow."[399] Simultaneously, we learn of Sharik's cognitive abilities: he can distinguish between individuals based on the values he connects to people's appearance. Later, we see the professor performing the same type of scrutiny when he is visited by the new Building Committee, underscoring Sharik's human-like level of cognition. When the professor identifies one of his visitors as a woman, he tells them that: "In that case, you may keep your cap on; but you, gracious sir, I ask you to remove your headgear."[400]

In the opening passages, which contain the first-person narration, we thus learn a little about Sharik's self, although these passages are short. As soon as Sharik accepts food from the professor on the street, the narration shifts to a third-person omniscient narrator, although the focalisation remains through Sharik until his transformation. This shift occurs when Sharik receives his name (the Russian diminutive for "ball"),[401] and when he receives food from the professor. This is when Sharik

[395] Andrianova, "Narrating Animal Trauma…" p. 2
[396] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 3; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 119
[397] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 3; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 119
[398] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 5; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… pp. 120-121
[399] Elena Fratto, "Endocrine Glands and the Anthropocene: Metabolic Storytelling in Mikhail Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog*," *Russian Literature*, vols. 114-115 (2020), p. 49
[400] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 25; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 135
[401] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 6; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… pp. 121-122

begins to lose control of the narrative and it signifies the commencement of the incongruent power relation between the professor and Sharik, human and dog. "[T]he Cracow sausage [which the professor feeds to Sharik on the street], is the means to lure Šarik into a realm that is alien to him,"[402] Milla Fedorova argues. Immediately, after having been fed the sausage Sharik turns into a submissive pet at the mercy of the professor. Preobrazhenskii whistles at him and Sharik responds "Follow you? To the ends of the Earth. You can kick me with your suede shoes and I won't say a word."[403] In the professor's apartment Sharik has lost all of his power and freedom; the walls of the apartment restrain him, as does the collar the professor puts on him.

Even so, Sharik enjoys his new status as the pet of a gentleman. "I am handsome," he says looking into a mirror, "Perhaps an unknown canine prince incognito. (…) Filipp Filippovich is a man of great taste and he wouldn't pick up any old stray dog he came across."[404] He even enjoys the collar that the professor puts on him to go for walks. Eric Laursen argues that the collar, although it is a symbol of Sharik's "servitude," allows him to "cross previously blocked thresholds." Additionally, it invokes respect from the doorman and envy from stray dogs.[405] Laursen further argues that…:

> With his collar, the dog gains status but forfeits a true understanding of the world around him. In particular, he fails to understand his own place in the apartment. The dog is mystified as he is brought into the operating room (…). He is sedated, his point of view vanishes, and we learn that the dog has been chosen not as a noble pet but as a disposable scientific subject.[406]

After the operation and Bormental''s diary recounting the operation which turns Sharik into a human, the narration shifts again from focalisation through Sharik to an extradiegetic focalisation – a fly on the wall in the professor's apartment. Anastassiya Andrianova argues that "[s]hifting species boundaries in *The Heart of a Dog* are (…) echoed by the shifting narrative voices."[407] However, the narrative shifts have further implications: the narrative discourse after the operation, which turns Sharik into Sharikov, paradoxically emphasises Sharikov's animal characteristics, rather than his human ones. This is underscored by how exclaimed phrases from Sharikov's mouth are "barked,"[408]

---

[402] Milla Fedorova, "Food and Humanism. Bulgakov's Dialogue with Tolstoj on Dogs' Food, Vegetarianism and Human Nature in 'Sobač'e serdtse,'" *Russian Literature*, vol. 65, no. 4 (May 2009), p. 441
[403] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 9; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 123
[404] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 41; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… 147
[405] Laursen, "Bad Words are Not Allowed!" p. 498
[406] Laursen, "Bad Words Are Not Allowed!" p. 498
[407] Andrianova, "Narrating Animal Trauma…" p. 12
[408] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, pp. 73, 78, 79, 83, 98, 116, 119; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… pp. 169, 173, 174, 177, 188, 201, 204

and how his 'uncivilised' acts such as hunting a cat into the bathroom of the apartment, causing pipes to burst which flood the professor's home, is judged solely through the prejudiced gaze of the other characters in the apartment who see only a monster and not an individual. As Natalia Dame argues,

> …by not granting Sharikov the first-person narrative, Bulgakov prevents his character from winning the reader's sympathy. One only gets to know Sharikov through the decidedly negative portrayals presented by the other bourgeois narrators, Preobrazhenskii and Bormental, whose continuous disapproval of Sharikov exposes their own class privilege and bias.

In other words, the shift in focalisation away from Sharik/Sharikov further establishes him as 'other' and serves to emphasise his monstrosity. Having been subjected to the fury of the professor after Sharik's mishap in the bathroom, Sharik asks "Will you beat me, Pops [*papasha*]?"[409] suggesting that Sharik interprets his relationship with his scientist-creator as similar to a relationship between father and son.

That Sharik addresses the professor as 'Pops,' however, is also an act of defiance. One of the many rules that Preobrazhenskii enforces in the apartment is that one should address him with his given name and patronymic: Filipp Filippovich. When Sharikov calls the professor Pops again in this scene, it revives an earlier scene where Sharikov and the professor argue about the rules imposed by the professor and Sharikov says "You're really putting the squeeze on me, Pops."[410] The professor loses his temper and demands to be addressed correctly, before Sharikov exclaims, or barks in the narrator's words, "Did I ask to have the surgery? (…) Fine behaviour! Grabbed an animal, sliced up his head and now you mock him."[411] Following this very human exclamation, expressing a feeling of injustice, the judgmental narrative voice dehumanises Sharikov by noting that he barks his interjection. However, as Andrea McDowell argues, "within the fictive universe of the story, the reader must acknowledge and accept the non-human animal voice as independent and valid; otherwise, only the anthropomorphic perspective dominates, thereby diminishing the transgressive nature of Preobrazhenskii's actions."[412] That is, to rightfully condemn the actions of the professor, one must listen to Sharik/Sharikov's voice, although presented scarcely after the operation and

---

[409] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 84; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 178
[410] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 73; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 169
[411] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 73; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 169
[412] Andrea McDowell, "'*I ona byla chelovekom'* (For the Dog was Once a Human Being): The Moral Obligation in Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog*," *Otherness: Essays and Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Sep. 2016), p. 207

prejudicially assessed by the characters surrounding him. Here, Sharikov judges the actions of the professor and exposes his inhumane actions but is let down by a narration that dehumanises him.

The narrative shifts within the novella thus serve as markers of changes in power relations. The closer the narration is to Sharik/Sharikov, the more power he has in creating his own discourse. Paradoxically, this means that Sharik/Sharikov is most powerful as a dog. He is in control of the narration and of judging the people and phenomena he observes. After the operation, and before the reversal in the epilogue where he again assumes power of the narration, Sharikov almost vanishes from it. He is much more talked about than talking himself. We learn of his endeavours not from his mouth, but through the professor's judgmental voice. It is thus a combination of the professor's interference in the stray dog's life, and a narrational voice that removes focalisation from Sharik to the professor, which deprive Sharik/Sharikov the chance of self-definition. Before Sharikov is returned to his canine state at the hands of the professor, Preobrazhenskii and Shvonder attempt to turn Sharikov into their versions of a good person. The professor's education of Sharikov focuses on good table manners and proper language, while Shvonder attempts to instil communal values within Sharikov through the teachings of Marxist writers. These attempts at educating Sharikov will in the following section be treated as civilising missions that resemble the ways in which colonial empires would try to 'civilise' their colonial subjects in their colonies.

How the Professor and Shvonder Deprive Sharikov of Selfhood

The beginning of Chapter 6 of *A Dog's Heart* which is the chapter immediately following Bormental''s diary recording the days after the operation, sees notes hanging around the apartment in the professor's handwriting. One reads "*I forbid eating sunflower seeds in the apartment*," while another reads "*playing musical instruments between the hours of 5 p.m. and 7 a.m. is forbidden.*"[413] In general the professor, and later Bormental' too, outlines many rules that Sharikov must follow. Some of them forbids Sharikov from sleeping in the kitchen, to call Zina 'Zinka,' to throw cigarette butts on the floor and to spit, while other rules tell him to be careful at the urinal and to not call the professor 'Pops' or 'Comrade,' but to use his given name and patronymic.[414] The professor and Bormental''s small verbal injections of 'civility' into Sharikov through rigid rules for behaviour comes to remind one of parents teaching their children table manners.

[413] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 69 [original emphasis]; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii…* p. 166
[414] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, pp. 71-73; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii…* pp. 168-169

As argued above, Chapter 6 represents the beginning of a shift in the power relation between the professor and Sharik/Sharikov. The professor is no longer in complete control over Sharikov's actions, but the narration and the judgmental gaze from the professor, through whom the narrative is focalised, represents Sharikov as a monstrous creature akin to the representation of the colonised in colonial discourse.[415] As Yvonne Howell argues, "[I]n Bormental's journal (…), Sharikov is represented as a lower species on his way to becoming a higher one. In the next chapter, Sharikov appears to us as a degenerate who is descending, rather than ascending, the putative ladder of evolution."[416]

Sharikov is seen not understanding social rules and how to act in relation to others, meanwhile he is not obeying the commands of the professor and his assistant, like he did when he was a dog. The representation of Sharikov has led some scholars to argue that Sharik was more human than his human double, Sharikov. A. C. Wright for instance argues that Sharikov is "a symbol for the lowest, animal type of humanity."[417] However, as Andrianova argues, "stressing that Sharik is more human than the human Comrade Sharikov whose organs he inherits, the focus is on humanity at the expense of the animal."[418] Additionally, it misses the fact that the narration itself alienates Sharikov from the reader and that all his actions are assessed through the judgmental voices of the professor and Bormental'. As the professor and Bormental' become increasingly outraged by Sharikov's behaviour, there is a shift in their representation too. Suddenly, the narration characterises their exclamations as barks and howls too.[419] As in the case of Sharikov's barks which served to underline his monstrosity in the narrative representation, the barks and howls of the professor and his assistant underline their madness. But what is turning them mad is the 'monstrous creature' they have created. Thus, their madness works in reverse and refers to Sharikov, a way for the narrative to resolve them of any blame for their 'monstrous' actions. As the postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon argues in *The Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre*, 1961),

> Confronted with a world ruled by the settler, the native is always presumed guilty. But the native's guilt is never a guilt which he accepts; it is rather a kind of curse, a sort of sword of Damocles, for, in his innermost spirit the

[415] See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington, (London: Penguin Books, 2001), pp. 32-33, in which Fanon shows how the native is represented as "bestiary" by the coloniser.
[416] Howell, "Eugenics, Rejuvenation…" p. 556
[417] Wright, "Animals and Animal Imagery…" p. 227
[418] Andrianova, "Narrating Animal Trauma…" p. 7
[419] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, pp. 93, 100, 105; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… pp. 184, 189, 193

native admits no accusation. He is overpowered but not tamed; he is treated as an inferior but he is not convinced of his inferiority. He is patiently waiting until the settler is off guard to fly at him.[420]

Examining some of Fanon's arguments as they are presented in the works *Black Skin, White Masks* (*Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*, 1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* reveals how the relationship between Preobrazhenskii and Sharikov is similar to the relationship between the settler and the native, the coloniser and the colonised. In both these works, Fanon argues that it is the coloniser who creates the colonised. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon writes that "[i]nferiorization is the native correlative to the European's feeling of superiority,"[421] while in *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon argues that "it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence."[422] Naturally, however, the overarching theme in Fanon's works is colonial racism, and this is not present in Bulgakov's novella. Although we do not know the complexion of Sharikov's skin, as this information is not offered to the reader, we can with some certainty assume that he is white. Nonetheless, as is discussed above, Sharikov is being othered both by the narration in which he exists and by the characters who surround him within this narrative. In this instance, Fanon's theories can be useful for in this instance, is to reveal how the apartment within which Bulgakov's novella mainly takes place, can function as a space symbolic of Russian and Soviet colonisation within their own borders. Within the walls of the apartment, as within the borders of the Soviet sphere, there exists an uneven relation between those who subscribe to the dominant ideology and those who do not. The dominant ideology interpellates (or attempts to interpellate) the subject. Whether that be a Soviet citizen of any class or ethnicity or the dog-turned-human.

In this light, the relationship between Preobrazhenskii and Sharikov can be read as a relationship akin to that between the coloniser and the colonised, or master and slave. Erica Fudge analyses the relation between Sharik, the dog, and the professor in the same way:

> Here human status is secured by the dominion of the human and the obedient submission of the animal: obedience here signalling not only canine acceptance of human rules, but also canine agreement with human rules — an agreement that makes human dominion seem natural."[423]

[420] Fanon, *The Wretched…* p. 41
[421] Fanon, *Black Skin…* p. 73
[422] Fanon, *The Wretched…* p. 28
[423] Fudge, "At the Heart…" pp. 14-15

"The first thing the native learns is to stay in his place, and not go beyond certain limits,"[424] Fanon writes – and this is definitely the case with Sharik in his canine state. However, this relationship changes as the dog is turned into a human. Sharikov is now equipped with a critical nature and has the ability to rebel verbally and through his actions, as Yvonne Howell argues "[t]he man-dog is crafty enough to figure out how he can use the politicized atmosphere to denounce his benefactor and free himself from the rules the latter imposes."[425] The operation has thus awakened Sharik/Sharikov's class awareness and he has realised the uneven power relation between him and the professor. Sharikov's rebellion begins with him complaining about the professor's many rules: "You and your rules… don't spit, don't smoke… don't go there… What is all this? It's just like being on the tram. Why don't you let me live?"[426] However, this only leads to anger from his creator.

The presumption of Sharikov's guilt is underlined by how rules apply differently to Sharikov and the professor. The professor demands to be addressed with first name and patronymic but refuses to use Sharikov's first name and patronymic. Sharikov is helped by Shvonder to find a suitable name for himself – Poligraf Poligrafovich Sharikov – and helps him gain his documents so that he can become a recognised Soviet citizen. However, the professor and the others in the apartment refuse to use his names in the manner they demanded of Sharikov. Even worse is it when Darya Petrovna calls Sharikov "Telegraf Telegrafovich"[427] while he is unconscious. As Natalia Dame argues, this is a dismissal of Sharikov's identity:

> Sharikov launches a similar complaint against Bormental, who tells Sharikov to address him formally by his patronymic but does not return the favour. While this lack of reciprocity incites Sharikov's indignation, it does not bother Preobrazhenskii, who likewise refuses to call Sharikov by his chosen full name, Poligraf Poligrafovich, and, in so doing, dismisses Sharikov's identity. As these examples indicate, Sharikov's outbursts are more than just examples of his vulgarity and obstinacy. Rather, they represent Sharikov's attempt to defend his lifestyle and his right to be himself.[428]

Not only is Sharikov robbed of a chance to define himself by a narration that rarely lets him speak, when he speaks his words are distorted by the judgmental voices that exist around Preobrazhenskii's apartment and rob him of the chance of obtaining selfhood. Additionally, the constant attempts to

---

[424] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched…* p. 40
[425] Howell, "Eugenics, Rejuvenation…" p. 550
[426] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 73; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii…* p. 169
[427] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 109; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii…* p. 196
[428] Dame, "Why is Sharikov Dead?" p. 36

'civilise' Sharikov from both the professor and Shvonder rob him of any opportunity to develop a 'self' naturally.

Sharikov identifies Shvonder as the enemy of the professor and sees building a relationship with Shvonder as a way to rebel against Preobrazhenskii. Shvonder in turn sees this as a way to force the professor into giving up some of his rooms. As Eric Laursen argues, "[t]he professor tries to civilize the creature with rigid rules, etiquette, and high culture. Comrade Shvonder tries to transform him with a new name, the proper documents, and Communist propaganda."[429] At first glance, giving Sharikov a name and helping him get his documents in order seems like a way to help Sharikov on his journey to selfhood. For instance, Shvonder defends Sharikov's right to voice his opinion when he says "Forgive me, Professor, Citizen Sharikov is completely correct. It is his right to participate in the discussion of his own fate…"[430] However, Shvonder clearly has ulterior motives with his mission of 'civilising' Sharikov, and his mission also involves injecting into Sharikov proper proletarian values, which is seen in Chapter 7 as Sharikov is reading the correspondence between Friedrich Engels and Karl Kautsky.[431] As such, Shvonder's actions are no more well-meaning than the professor's attempts to inject 'civility' into Sharikov. They are both concerned with what they each are convinced is the right way to be human, one characterised by order and good manners, the other concerned with being a proper proletarian, doing good for the collective.

Although Sharikov becomes a useful citizen in society in the form of his job as "the head of the Subdepartment for Control of Moscow's Stray Animals (cats and so on),"[432] Shvonder is not in complete control of Sharikov's actions. Some of his words seem taken out of the mouth of Shvonder, such as the way he addresses others as Comrade, that he reads Engels and Kautsky, and that he criticises the professor for not sharing his apartment when he wants Sharikov to share the vodka: "…one is spread out over seven rooms with forty pairs of pants, while another forages looking for food in rubbish bins."[433] Sharikov, however, defies Shvonder's proletarian teachings when he refuses to fight in the Soviet army. "I'm not going to any war (…) I'll go on the list, but fight – you can go blow."[434] Sharikov continues to argue that given his physical condition (having a huge scar in his head), he should be medically exempt from going to war. Again, the question of listening to the 'animal' rather than the human judgmental voices arises. Shvonder dismisses Sharikov's argument

[429] Laursen, "Bad Words Are Not Allowed!" pp. 491-492
[430] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 78; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 173
[431] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 92; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 183
[432] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 113; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 198
[433] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 93; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 184
[434] Bulgakov, *A Dog's Heart*, p. 79; Bulgakov, *Sobranie sochinenii*… p. 174

by saying: “Well, that’s not important right now,” showing the same disregard for Sharikov that the professor did.

Sharikov’s quest for selfhood never materialises as the professor decides to reverse his operation in order to keep the status quo in his apartment. As Sharikov is on his way to becoming a useful Soviet citizen with his work getting rid of the stray cats of Moscow’s streets, the professor is wary of his own situation. It is not the operation that turns Sharikov into a beast, but rather the judgmental gazes and voices of the professor and his employees. Shvonder may not see Sharikov as a beast, but his approach to the ‘civilising mission’ of Sharikov is no less prejudiced than the professor’s. Shvonder sees Sharikov as a project, a being who can be turned into a good proletarian with the right educational practice. In this way, *A Dog’s Heart* sums up the Russian and Soviet Empires’ approach toward its own citizens, that is its self-colonisation. The subjects of the Russian and Soviet Empires were seen as monstrous creatures at the mercy of educational policies and discourses that were meant to mould these monsters into useful citizens. If they refused to conform, they were disposable. Sharikov is turned (back) into an animal and thus suffers a similar fate to countless Russian and Soviet citizens who were dehumanised and disposed of via exiling, imprisoning, and killing. In the next two chapters we shall examine works of literature which depicts people who were deemed superfluous in Soviet society (just as Sharikov was deemed superfluous by Preobrazhenskii) by examining conditions for the peasantry forced into collectivisation and prisoners in the Gulag camps.

Chapter VI
Losing Selfhood to Ideology: Individual and Collective Superfluity in *The Foundation Pit*

> "Why are there flies in winter?" asked Nastya.
> "Because of the kulaks, my little daughter," said Chiklin.
> Nastya suffocated in her hand the fat kulak fly (…) and then said, "Well, you kill them as a class then! Otherwise there'll be flies in winter and not in summer and the birds will have nothing to eat."[435]

"We sense everything – only not ourselves,"[436] the collective speaking in unison declares after the completion of the dekulakisation process of the collective farm (*kolkhoz*) in Andrei Platonov's *The Foundation Pit* (*Kotlovan*, 1930, published in the USSR in 1987). The novel takes place in the late 1920s as Josef Stalin's forced collectivisation of the peasantry known as dekulakisation intensified. In Russian, dekulakisation, or *raskulachivanie*, refers specifically to the seizure of property, but many historians now use the term to also denote the forced displacement and collectivisation of millions of peasants deemed to be *kulaki*.[437] In the present text, the term will be used in its in this broader sense to refer to the methods with which the policy was enforced as well as the seizure of property. Stalin's policy involved forcibly displacing peasants into collective farms and killing or exiling those who resisted. The horrors which resulted from this policy are represented with a satirical distance in Platonov's novel. The collective speaking in unison is one example of this, while the absurd degree to which people, and even animals, follow the decree of collectivisation only contribute to the satirical representation of the imperial decree. For the characters in *The Foundation Pit*, the collectivisation of the peasantry means the casting away of selfhood, and this truth is learned by the novel's protagonist, Voshchev, as well. As he tries to find meaning in his existence, he learns that he must give up the notion of self in order to fit into Soviet proletarian society.

Voshchev is from the very opening of the novel portrayed as a character on the margins of society as he is fired from the factory he works in because he requested leave to enable him to find truth. Voshchev is completely unfit for the position made available to him and is unable to make himself useful for society or change his situation in any way. In this sense, he closely resembles the

---

[435] Andrey Platonov, *The Foundation Pit* translated by Robert Chandler, Elizabeth Chandler & Olga Meerson, (London: Vintage Books, 2010), p. 110; Andrei Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3 (Moscow: *Vremia*, 2011), p. 503
[436] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 119; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 510
[437] Suslov, "'Luchshe peregnut…" p. 373

superfluous characters of nineteenth-century Russian literature. However, the representation of superfluity is not solely projected through Voshchev's search for truth. It is also projected through the dekulakised collective farm. Speaking in unison and referred to by a singular noun, the individual peasants that make up 'the collective' have lost their sense of self completely. While they are useful to society as a unit, they are perceived to be useless, or unimportant, as individuals, rendering them superfluous. This is a collective superfluity, given that the collective, which highlights their superfluity as individuals, is a part of themselves.

This condition in Platonov's novel is a direct result of the political and historical context in which the work was written. For the Soviet authorities there was nothing above communist ideology, which prescribed that one must sacrifice oneself for the benefit of the collective. All action must be done with the collective in mind. The collective speaking in unison is the result of not only Platonov's pen and mind, but also the perseverance with which authorities trumpeted their decrees. At the heart of this ideology was labour and production, none of which Voshchev finds helpful in his search for truth. He is unable to follow the communist ideals, and instead finds himself isolated in his existence and emerges as an inefficient worker. However, as we shall see, the ramifications of his inability to follow the ideology are insignificant compared with the consequences for peasants refusing to collectivise.

This chapter analyses the process of the elimination of the *kulaki* as a class in the Soviet Union as a mode of self-colonisation. Through an analysis of the Soviet metanarrative, which employed the term *kulak* to cast peasants as wealthy and greedy, the chapter shows how the otherness of the whole of the peasantry was constructed. The arbitrariness with which the term was applied by authorities, represents a major part in this construction of otherness.[438] The chapter juxtaposes the historical context of the Soviet discourse directed at the peasantry, with the representation of the peasants in Platonov's novel as one unified mass of unspecified individuals. If dekulakisation was a way for Soviet authorities to purge society of superfluous elements (see Chapter VII), then Platonov's novel shows, through the collective's admission that they have no sense of self, that the result was a sense of superfluity in the peasant class.

The novel juxtaposes two kinds of superfluity: the collective kind represented through the collective farm, and the individual kind represented through Voshchev's search for truth. In this binary juxtaposition of different versions of superfluity, the peasant character, Elisei, who has joined

---

[438] Lynne Viola, "Collectivization in the Soviet Union: Specificities and Modalities" in Constantin Iordachi & Arnd Bauerkämper (eds.), *The Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2014), p. 58

the workers at the foundation pit after fleeing dekulakisation, emerges as a victim of both kinds of superfluity. His status as a middle peasant, or *seredniak*, underscores the in-betweenness, or hybridity, of his character, which is only further accentuated by the suspicion felt towards him by the other workers at the pit. Elisei's alienation from both the peasant and the proletarian classes underscores his superfluity.

Individual Superfluity: The Production Novel and the Superfluous Man

There are some obvious issues with applying the literary trope of superfluity to a novel like *The Foundation Pit*: First, it is similar in its structure to that of the production novel, which in its nature is void of superfluity: the plot of the production novel typically involves the transformation of the 'spontaneous' individual into a 'conscious' member of the collective, as Katerina Clark has shown.[439] Second, it is written in a literary period which is not traditionally considered an era for superfluous characters. Third, the superfluous man is often painted as a character belonging to the aristocracy, a class which had been virtually abolished after the October Revolution. Nonetheless, certain key elements of the novel make it possible to discuss *The Foundation Pit* in terms of superfluous man literature, not least Voshchev's inability to conform to society along with his intellectual search for truth.

While the plot of Platonov's novel follows the same narrative structure as a Soviet production novel, there is a clear difference in the outcomes of the heroes in the typical production novel and in *The Foundation Pit*. Thomas Seifrid argues that the plot of *The Foundation Pit* is almost identical with the plot of the socialist realist novel *Cement* (*Tsement*, 1925) by Fedor Gladkov (1883-1958), albeit with one major difference: Gleb, the novel's hero, is transformed over the course of the novel from "a wily loner into a disciplined and subordinate member of the collective," while no such change occurs in Platonov's hero.[440] The lack of change in Voshchev's character draws the comparison with a traditional superfluous man even closer.

Voshchev's longing desire for truth damages his productivity and makes him unfit in Soviet society, which hails those who set the collective before themselves (see Chapter V). Voshchev does not have the capacity to do so, which frustrates the other workers at the foundation pit. Additionally, Voshchev is juxtaposed with conformist characters who highlight the non-conformity of the

[439] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel*... pp. 256-260

[440] Thomas Seifrid, *A Companion to Andrey Platonov's* The Foundation Pit (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009) pp. 106-109. However, as Clark has noted, *Cement* was written before the formalisation of socialist realism in 1934, and deviates from the common production novel in a number of ways. See Clark, *The Soviet Novel*... pp. 80-82

superfluous hero, such as Chiklin, Safronov, and to an extent Nastia. Thus, while *The Foundation Pit* certainly constitutes "a self-conscious commentary on [the production novel],"[441] as Seifrid argues, it must also be read in relation to superfluous man literature, with which it shares a similar cast of characters and the protagonist's fatal flaw. Indeed, the similarities between *The Foundation Pit* and the production novel only serve to further underscore the novel's similarity with superfluous man literature, making Voschev's lack of positive change all the more apparent.

The superfluous character is generally seen as a product of the circumstances of life during the despotic reign of Tsar Nicholas I, and the hopelessness of change after the failed Decembrist Revolt in 1825 (see Chapter II), which poses another problem of reading the novel in line with superfluous man literature given the temporal gap between this event and Platonov's time of writing. A central argument of this thesis, however, is that the political and cultural conditions which gave rise to superfluity under tsarist autocracy—chiefly, the phenomenon of self-colonisation—persisted after the October Revolution, although in changed form. The Soviet imperialist machine continued to treat humans as disposable subjects and continued to censor opposition. Therefore, for those who did not subscribe to official ideology, the hopelessness of change to the political and cultural situation after the October Revolution, was similar to that of post-1825.

Moreover, if one takes a closer look at the definition of the superfluous man, which in Ellen Chances' assessment revolves around the dichotomy between conformity and non-conformity,[442] Voshchev matches the non-conformity of the superfluous man. Voshchev is portrayed as a non-conformist from the outset of the novel, as he, just after his dismissal, goes to a tavern which was full of "untampered people, abandoned to oblivion, and among them Voshchev felt more cut off and at ease."[443] The tavern emerges as a vacuum in which there exists no expectations to adhere to the principles of proletarianism and existing here is much easier for Voshchev. However, once he finds himself at the foundation pit, he is clearly not at ease. It is not difficult to find the conformist characters that through juxtaposition highlight the non-conformity of our superfluous man. While one might argue that Voshchev finding work almost immediately after his dismissal from the factory is a sign that he conforms, but such a claim would ignore that Voshchev cannot simply decide to not work, as the narrator also makes clear: "He again faced the task of living and nourishing himself, and so he set off to the trade union committee, to defend his unneeded labor."[444] In the foundation pit

[441] Seifrid, *A Companion…* p. 107
[442] See Chances, *Conformity's Children…*
[443] Platonov, p. 1; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 413
[444] Platonov, p. 3; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 415

itself, Voshchev hardly works compared to his colleagues who often work long into the evening to show their dedication to the ideology. Voshchev is struggling to keep up with the others, and is often distracted looking for soothing signs of nature around the giant man-made hole he works in. The same problems he had when he worked in the factory, an obsession with finding truth, resurfaces in the pit and makes him unable to work as hard as the others.

Just as in most other works of superfluous man literature Voshchev "thinks too much and questions too much, which eventually lead to a sense of dissatisfaction with everything and everybody around him, including himself,"[445] as Nayki writes about Pechorin from Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* (see Chapter II). The disgruntlement he feels about himself is made clear in the very opening scene, while the disgruntlement from others simultaneously is made clear by his redundancy from the factory. Furthermore, as Pechorin found himself between two different cultural identities (Russian and Caucasian), Voshchev stands between the proletarian and the bourgeois cultures. He cannot readily accept proletarian culture given his eternal search for truth, which in the novel is represented as a bourgeois undertaking, as we shall see shortly. In this way, Voshchev emerges as a hybrid character caught between conflicting positions, unable to take a definitive position in either. Just as any other hybrid, as we have seen, Voshchev is distrusted by the people surrounding him who belong to the dominant culture of the Empire.

Opposite Voshchev stands Chiklin, who is portrayed as a person of lesser intelligence and lower level of reflection, but also as someone who is willing to do anything in the name of Communism. But these characteristics are not the key reasons why he stands in opposition to Voshchev, but rather that Chiklin is prepared to give up his sense of selfhood. When they discover that Safronov and Kozlov have been murdered the already devout communist becomes even more devoted. "Let the whole class die – I alone will remain in its place and I'll achieve the whole of its task in the world! I don't know how to live for myself anyway," Chiklin proclaims. And speaking to Kozlov's dead body, Chiklin says: "[Y]ou don't need to bother to live either! I'll forget my own self, but I shall have you here all the time."[446]

These proclamations from Chiklin are naturally uttered in a state of grief, but they indicate how an individual when giving oneself over to the ideology, must literally forfeit one's self. Chiklin does not know how to live for himself given his devotion to Communism, and it shows how conformity in the Soviet Union came with the cost of selfhood. Chiklin seems aware of these

[445] Nayki, "Anticipating the Existentialist…" p. 186
[446] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 76; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 475

conditions and is ready to give up his sense of self for Kozlov, and by extension the principles which Kozlov was preaching at the collective farm. The loss of self for the collectivised people, however, is represented in much more satirical terms, as they can only speak in unison and are referred to by the narrator as a single entity, presumably as a parody to official discourse. Thus, the discrepancy that exists between the consequences for the unwilling non-conformist, Voshchev, for whom there is no consequence, and the consequences for the peasants deemed to be *kulaki*, who are deported or murdered, shows the fundamental prejudice that existed against the peasantry represented in Platonov's novel.

Voshchev's quest to find truth ends in an anti-climactic way with the death of the Activist. Although, Voshchev realises, when the Activist lays dying, that it is him who has sucked out the meaning of life from not only him, but the whole proletarian class, he never manages to find it himself and is still left with the same feeling of detachment from society:

> Voshchev leaned down again over the activist's body, which had once acted with such predatory significance that the whole of universal truth, the whole meaning of life had been located in him and him alone, leaving Voshchev with nothing but torment of mind, nothing but unconsciousness in the rushing current of existence and the submissiveness of a blind element.[447]

Voshchev's 'realisation of truth' is that truth is held by whoever dictates the dominant discourse. That is, there is no truth, but the one that the Soviet authorities construct. Although, a symbol of the Communist ideology has vanished from the surface of the Earth, the ideology is still ubiquitous in Soviet society and there is no escaping it for Voshchev. This realisation invokes a comment made by Safronov early in the novel concerning Voshchev's search for truth. Safronov initially feels sympathetic toward Voshchev's quest, but is critical toward the concept of truth, seemingly because it might go against the official ideology:

> Safronov, who loved beauty of life and politeness of mind, stood in respect for Voshchev's fate, although at the same time he felt deeply agitated: Wasn't truth merely a class enemy? After all, the class enemy was now capable of appearing even in the form of dream and imagination![448]

[447] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, pp. 141-142; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 528
[448] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 34; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 441

Implicit in this passage is that, if Voshchev finds truth, whatever the truth may be, he would be a class enemy. Like a middle peasant not being completely *kulak* or *bedniak*, Voshchev occupies a territory between the extremes of the proletarian and the bourgeois. He is reluctantly working at the foundation pit, since there is no other choice available to him, but he works significantly less hard than his colleagues given his occupation with the concept of truth. This is why, in the eyes of Safronov, truth appears as a class enemy – because trying to find it stands in the way of hard work. But truth is also a class enemy given the search for it represents a potential threat to the standing order. That is, like the Bhabhan hybrid, Voshchev has the potential to create a conflicting discourse which speaks against the official discourse of the Soviet Empire. That is, truth is an element capable of threatening the power of the Communist government.

In the collective there is no longer any truth to be found. The Activist has taken the concept of truth from them, that is, deprived them of selfhood. This results in a collective superfluity in which the collective has completely lost their sense of selfhood but have gained the ability to (or perhaps have come under the illusion that they) sense everything else. In the next section, I will examine the discourse of dekulakisation as an othering discourse directed at the whole peasantry. This contextualisation will be used in the analysis of the representation of the peasantry in Platonov's novel.

Eliminating a Class: The Othering Discourse of Dekulakisation

When the workers at the foundation pit dig up a few empty coffins, the secondary plot of Platonov's novel unfolds. It turns out the coffins belong to the nearby collective farm, to which Safronov and Kozlov, two workers from the pit, have gone to preach socialism. Voshchev follows a peasant back to the collective farm to deliver back the coffins, but he discovers that Safronov and Kozlov have been murdered. Chiklin then arrives to investigate the murders, and he and Voshchev become involved in the elimination of *kulaki* at the collective farm overseen by a mysterious character referred to as 'the Activist.' The purge of *kulaki* from the collective farm is finished when they set them adrift on a raft down the nearby river. The absurd setting adrift of the peasants is the culmination of a series of absurdities found at the collective farm, such as the collective speaking in unison, a string of horses that voluntarily collectivise, and a bear working as a blacksmith's hammerer who is particularly skilled in sniffing out *kulaki*. Furthermore, we learn that chickens which do not lay eggs are categorized as class enemies. In this grotesque satirical way, Platonov represents the horrors of

Stalin's dekulakisation which, it is estimated, affected 600,000-650,000 households (or approximately 3,000,000 people) by the end of 1929.[449]

The dekulakisation process, which took place from 1917 to 1937, was not only a process of redistributing land and eliminating the landowning class (referred to as *kulaki*) as had been promised, but rather a violent and repressive measure to increase the peasantry's contribution to the state apparatus.[450] Thus, it was economic considerations that prompted Soviet authorities to introduce force in their collectivisation of the peasantry. In the imperial era the peasantry made up most of the population, but its tax contribution was relatively small. Following the Revolution the Bolsheviks were therefore looking for ways of increasing the peasantry's contribution to the state.[451] It was no coincidence that Soviet authorities used the term *kulak* to refer to a perceived enemy of the state. The term, which literally means 'fist,' is connected to greed[452] and referred to landowning peasants who leased land and agricultural equipment to peasants of fewer means. It was used in this sense before the revolution, but did not refer to a specific class, as it did after the revolution in state-sponsored dictionaries.[453] This effectively constructed the otherness of the wealthier peasants and justified the forced collectivisation and displacement of them.

The identification of *kulaki* was extremely arbitrary and subject to constant change. The dekulakisation process itself was effectively directed at the entire peasant class, and the discourse directed at so-called *kulaki* painted the peasantry as a greedy enemy of the Communist Revolution. It was not just descendants from the imperial era's landowning nobility who could be categorised as *kulak*, but also peasants who owned a certain amount of property. For example, if a family owned a sophisticated agricultural machine, they could be deemed *kulak*, and some would even be deemed to be *kulaki* on the basis of owning a few cows or a horse.[454] In this sense, Soviet authorities created an official discourse that represented the peasants as greedy and wealthy (a derogatory term in itself within the Communist worldview), which served the purpose of justifying the extreme measures taken against them.

---

[449] N.A. Ivnitskii, *Repressivnaia politika sovetskoi vlasti v derevne* (Moscow, 2000), p. 155 quoted in Suslov, "'Luchshe peregnut'…" pp. 388-389

[450] Collectivisation was voluntary until 1929, but in 1928 less than 1 percent of peasants worked in state and collective farms and authorities opted to use force to carry out their collectivisation policy. See Carol Scott Leonard, *Agrarian Reform in Russia: The Road from Serfdom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 69

[451] Leonard, *Agrarian Reform…* p. 62

[452] That is, *kulak* refers to a wealthy tight-fisted peasant who is unwilling to let go of their possessions or share their wealth.

[453] Dmitri Stanchevici, "The Rhetorical Construction of Social Classes in the Reports of Stalin's Secret Police," *Technical Writing and Communication*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2013), p. 277

[454] Suslov, "'Luchshe peregnut'..." p. 384

Peasants were divided into three categories: *kulaki* (well-off peasants), *seredniaki* (middle peasants), and *bedniaki* (poor peasants), of whom the only ones who were safe from deportation or murder were the *bedniaki*. *Seredniaki* were often considered collaborators of the *kulaki* and therefore the fear of being cast as *seredniak* was just as great as being cast as *kulak*.[455] In *The Foundation Pit* a peasant is so afraid of the 'middle peasant'-stamp that he tries as hard as he can not to fall over after receiving a hit to the face, so that Chiklin will not assume he has "kulak inclinations," and he can retain "the right to the life of a poor peasant."[456] Chiklin then gives the peasant a fatal punch to the stomach and the peasant's body is then put in a pile of already dead dekulakised peasants. In this way the peasant is conclusively categorised as *kulak*. That is, he is assumed to be *kulak* after he receives his punishment for being one. This fits well with how the dekulakisation process was carried out, as Andrei Suslov assesses: "Usually, the actual act of 'dekulakization' began before a final decision had been taken."[457]

Seredniaki found themselves in an awkward position since they belonged neither to the wealthy nor the poor peasant classes. As Sheila Fitzpatrick argues, they "occupied a terrain between two extremes."[458] While middle-peasants were technically free from the *kulak* stamp, they were viewed as potential *kulak*-sympathisers. The distrust felt toward them by the authorities carrying out the process of eliminating the *kulak* class is not unlike the distrust felt by colonisers against the Bhabhan hybrid, as Homi Bhabha writes:

> …in the very practice of domination the language of the master becomes hybrid – neither the one thing nor the other. The incalculable colonized subject – half acquiescent, half oppositional, always untrustworthy – produces an unresolvable problem of cultural difference for the very address of colonial cultural authority.[459]

That is, in the instance of *seredniaki*, the hybrid between a *bedniak* and a *kulak*, articulating the cultural difference of the *seredniaki* became impossible, despite the enormous resources that Soviet bureaucracy put into defining the different class categories.[460] In the end, it was probably easier to simply let decisions about whether a family was *kulak* or not, be taken by the people on the ground,

---

[455] Seifrid, *A Companion…* p. 95
[456] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 77; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 476
[457] Suslov, '"Luchshe peregnut,"' p. 387
[458] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 62
[459] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 49
[460] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks…* p. 33

as we saw with Suslov's example from the Perm *oblast*, and as they are represented in *The Foundation Pit*. Furthermore, as E. A. Kirianova writes:

> The centre's methods in realising the obligatory tasks and its "allotments" concerning the total percentage of farms subject to dekulakisation, combined with the arbitrariness of local authorities, who were given rights to decide exactly who should be considered *kulak*, aggravated the severity of [the dekulakisation process]. It was not rare that such decisions had an arbitrary character [such as] coincidences [*sluchainye momenty*], settling scores, neighbourly relations, personal friendships or hostilities. In the end, dekulakisation did not only affect the village's wealthy elite, but also in part *seredniaki*.[461]

In *The Foundation Pit*, the arbitrariness of peasant categories, which were the basis of the dekulakisation process, is represented with a few narrational hints. When Nastia, the orphan taken in by the workers in the pit after her mother's death, argues that they should kill two *kulaki* found at the collective farm, Safronov points out that two people do not constitute a class, and therefore killing them is illegal.[462] But later, when Chiklin and Voshchev discover that Kozlov and Safronov have been murdered at the farm, the Activist kills the peasant he believes to have committed the crime and when Chiklin in a fit of rage kills a random peasant, the Activist responds: "The center will never believe me if I say that there was just one murderer. But two – that's well and truly kulak class and organization for you!"[463] Further narrational hints about the arbitrariness of the dekulakisation process occur when the *kulak*-sniffing bear helps Chiklin identify *kulaki*. Here the narrative voice at times labels the peasant about to be dekulakised as "poor inhabitant," after which the same character is labelled as "the well-to-do man [*zazhitochnyi*],"[464] meaning that the peasant before being dekulakised is represented as poor, but as soon as the process of liquidating him begins, the peasant suddenly becomes wealthy.

As Fitzpatrick argues, the process of inventing the *kulak* class was not complete before dekulakisation itself had been finalised. The arbitrariness of the application of the *kulak* stamp was an expression of the authorities finding it difficult to define,

[461] E. A. Kirianova, "Lyudi. Sobytiya. Fakty. Rasskulachivanie krestyanstva centra Rossii v nachale 1930-kh godov" *Voprosy istorii*, vol. 5 (2006), p. 147
[462] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 64; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 465
[463] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 82; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 480
[464] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 113-114; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 506

> [but once a peasant] had been formally dekulakized, however, there was no room for further argument about his status: he was a *raskulachennyi*—that is, by definition a former (dekulakized) kulak. Thus, the Soviet liquidation of the kulak class could even be regarded as the final, definitive step in its invention.[465]

Eventually, the forced displacement of the peasantry and deportations of so-called *kulaki* to labour camps in remote regions became a crucial part of the subjugation of the masses in the Gulag-system, Lyudmila Lobchenko argues, and notes that "[n]ot only the head of the of dekulakised [*raskulachennykh*] families were subjected to lawlessness, arbitrariness, and violence, but also women, children and helpless elders,"[466] underscoring the ruthlessness of the dekulakisation process.

The arbitrariness with which the identification of *kulaki* was carried out, instilled fear within the peasantry. Peasants would make sure to consume or destroy any stock of food they had, and some even killed their livestock to avoid the *kulak* stamp.[467] In *The Foundation Pit* the narrator represents this aspect of life under dekulakisation in these terms:

> After liquidating all their last breathing livestock, the peasants had begun to eat beef and had instructed all members of their households to do the same: during this brief time they had eaten beef as if it were communion – no one had wanted to eat, but the flesh of dear and familiar carcasses had to be hidden away inside one's own body and preserved there from social ownership.[468]

Using words like 'liquidating' and 'social ownership,' the narrator imitates the Soviet metanarrative but turns it on its head. The consumption of all the beef, "as if it were communion," not only means that the meat was consumed by a single family who did not share it with others, it also draws on a comparison with Christianity in which communion is an important ritual. It thereby underscores the act of liquidating livestock as an act of rebellion against forced collectivisation.

The forced collectivisation and displacement effectively deprived the peasants of their freedom of movement previously received in 1861 when serfdom was abolished and serves as an example of how the October Revolution did not signify the end of policies of self-colonisation. Additionally, the arbitrariness with which peasants were categorised resembled the politics of difference and uncertainty conducted by the Russian Empire in which groups of people were given rights (which could easily be taken away) based on categorisations of their ethnicity, occupation, and

---

[465] Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!...* p. 46

[466] Lyudmila N. Lobchenko, "Raskulachivanie i spetspereselenie byvshikh kulakov na Evropeiskii Sever Rossii: istoriograficheskii aspekt," *Voprosy istorii*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2021), p. 135

[467] Seifrid, *A Companion…* p. 97

[468] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 102; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, pp. 496-497

religion (see Chapter I). The major change that occurred to these were concerned with the social classes of these individuals. In a reiteration of the politics of uncertainty, the Soviet authorities went after the peasants in the collectives as well in 1931, taking away their rights. As Suslov writes: "Peasants who had sought to safeguard themselves and their families by divesting themselves of their property and joining collective farm had no protection…"[469] As a result, people who had given up property of their own accord, could suddenly be labelled *kulak*, underscoring the uncertainty and arbitrariness of the Soviet metanarrative. These practices were justified by the Soviet authorities through a pejorative (othering) discourse directed at the so-called and ill-defined *kulaki* and was effectively a policy of self-colonisation directed at the peasantry as a whole in order to exploit them for economic profit. Like the institution of serfdom, which had exploited the peasantry for centuries, dekulakisation and forced displacement was a means to increase the contribution of the peasantry to benefit the urban population – a policy reminiscent of the old Empire.

In Platonov's novel, the measures of dekulakisation along with the Soviet metanarrative create the superfluity of both individual characters and the collective. This represents a major conflictual image of superfluity, as the individual characters in *The Foundation Pit* are unable to conform to the norms of society, while the collective has no choice but to conform. The following subsection will examine the collective superfluity as a result of a metanarrative which cast the peasantry greedy. It shows that the damnation of private ownership resulted in an absurd willingness to share everything – even one's selfhood. The section also examines the implication for the defected middle peasant, Elisei, who has fallen victim for both collective and individual superfluity. It is argued that the peasants are equipped with class awareness, while Voshchev refuses to become class aware: the collective realises their superfluity, while Voshchev does not. Class awareness, however, at least for the peasants in Platonov's novel, means the erasure of self-awareness and has moulded them into a faceless mass, without individuality. Voshchev, as we have seen, is very self-aware, which leads him to fail in Soviet society. This is not to argue, that the peasants in the novel succeed. On the contrary, given the Soviet policy of collectivisation the peasants are robbed of the chance to become individually successful. When examining the juxtaposition of Voshchev with the conformist characters at the foundation pit, it becomes clear that a willing loss of self-awareness is pivotal to conformity in Communist society.

[469] Suslov, "'Luchshe peregnut'…" p. 390

Collective Superfluity: Peasant Representations in *The Foundation Pit*

Readings of Platonov's *The Foundation Pit* often revolve around the theme of allegory.[470] Tora Lane, for instance, focuses on how the labourers are removing ground rather than building on it: "Therefore the 'ground' being laid turns into a destruction of ground, and the vanguard of the Revolution appears to be less the proletariat and more the nameless, fatherless people who never played a role on the historical scene,"[471] Lane argues referring to the peasantry. Duzhina exhibits the allegorical elements of Platonov's novel by arguing that *The Foundation Pit* "is completely realistic," but follows an allegorical plotline in, among other things, the construction of a 'common proletarian house [*obshcheproletarskii dom*]' which is never finished.[472] Duzhina also notes that the character of Nastia is embedded with allegorical meaning by arguing that: "All the details of Nastya's biography, the circumstances of her appearance at the foundation pit and her death, represents in allegorical form the hopelessness of the tragic turns of Russian history as Platonov understood them."[473]

There is a double-sidedness to the allegorical elements of Platonov's novel: There is the foundation pit itself, which exists, and the common proletarian house meant to be built on the site of the pit (which never comes into existence). Nastia, within this duality, represents both the present (represented in the foundation pit) and the future of Soviet society (represented in the common proletarian house) and as such she becomes a symbol of the bleak future of socialism in the Soviet Union, as Duzhina argues.[474] Seifrid, by contrast, reads Platonov's novel as a parody as he argues that Nastia is "an over-simplified, slogan-spouting symbol of socialism's future," while Zhachev, who has been "disfigured by imperialism," is disfigured in both a spiritual and literal sense. Additionally, there is the blacksmith's hammerer working himself beyond exhaustion who is "literally an 'industrious bear.'" But most importantly for this section, the members of the collective farm are speaking in unison and referred to with the singular noun "the collective [*kolkhoz*]," which serves as a parody to Stalin's first Five-Year Plan (1928-33), Seifrid argues.[475]

The focus for many of the allegorical readings of *The Foundation Pit* revolve around the materialisation of the Soviet future which the pit represents. While many, such as Seifrid, recognise

---

[470] See for instance: Kh. Giunter, "Allegoricheskie struktury v 'Kotlovane' A. Platonova," *Russian Literature*, vol. 56, nos. 1-3 (2004), pp. 107-119; M. V. Zavarkina, "Kvaziutopiia v tvorchestve A. Platonova 1930 godov," *Problemy istoricheskoi poetiki*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2015), pp. 570-588.

[471] Tora Lane, "A Groundless Foundation Pit," *Ulbandus Review*, vol. 14 (2011/2012), pp. 65-66

[472] N. I. Duzhina, "Stroitel'stvo sotsializma v povesti A. Platonova 'Kotlovan,'" *Studia Litteratum*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2019), p. 254

[473] Natalia Duzhina, "Vymysel, osnovannii na realnosti: Primety stalinskogo byta v povesti A. Platonova 'Kotlovan'" *Voprosy literatury*, no. 2 (2008), p. 102

[474] Duzhina, "Stroitel'stvo sotsializma…" p. 260

[475] Thomas Seifrid, *Andrey Platonov: Uncertainties of Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 142

how the collective speaks in unison is a parody of Stalinist discourse, few have examined in depth the representation of the peasant class in Platonov's novel. Instead of looking at the example of the peasants speaking in unison as parody, I will argue that there is a deeper meaning in the narrative representation of the collectivised peasants as one singular character, when it is juxtaposed with the singular representation of the peasant-turned-proletarian, Elisei. Indeed, the narrative voice in *The Foundation Pit* is often parodying Soviet discourse through its characters such as Chiklin, Safronov or Nastia making declarations of their attitudes toward the *kulaki*. Elisei's status as a defected middle-peasant makes these statements an actual threat to his life, which deeply affects the way he acts around the other workers at the foundation pit and underscores the narrative's othering ability in its discursive construction of the peasantry.

Just as Soviet discourse established differences between categories of peasants, the narrative voice in Platonov's novel establishes a distinction between the collectivised peasants and the ones who are outside of the collective. Members of the collective have no individual voice and speak only in unison. In just one short passage, some level of individuality is ascribed to the peasants of the collective, when the dekulakised peasants are about to be sent adrift and we suddenly hear individual voices: "Farewell, Yegor Semyonich, and forgive me!" a dekulakised peasant says. "There is nothing to forgive, Nikanor Petrovich. You forgive me!"[476] the peasant deemed fit for the collective farm responds, expressing guilt over the dekulakisation process that has taken place at the collective farm. The peasants who are being sniffed out by the bear to be dekulakised also speak for themselves, but the narrative voice is often ambiguous in the way they are represented, as the same people are referred to as poor and wealthy simultaneously, as outlined above.

Elisei, however, is the one peasant who is represented as an individual after he joins the workers at the foundation pit. But even he is not free from suspicion of being a *kulak*:

> Safronov was already discussing with himself whether the time had come to register this peasant in the trade union as service personnel, but he did not know whether or not the man was free of hired hands back in his village or how many head of livestock he owned, and so he held his intention back.[477]

Elisei is initially referred to either as simply "the peasant" or "the yellow-eyed peasant," and the reader is told that he "had come running from someplace in the field country" and was now

[476] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 103; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 498
[477] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 44; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 449

"redeeming his existence by taking on all the woman's work in the shared economy."[478] The others in the foundation pit, especially Safronov, are suspicious of Elisei, mostly because he shares his grievances about how much he misses his village with abundances of food.[479] The narrative representation of Elisei uses terms such as "forsaken" and paints him as a sorrowful character starring into "murky dankness,"[480] while repeatedly referring to his yellow eyes.[481] He is even compared to a barge hauler,[482] a reference to Ilya Repin's *The Barge Haulers on the Volga* (*Burlaki na Volge*, 1870-1873) – the archetypal representation of the suffering peasant class. The narrative representation of Elisei underscores his suffering and when he is revealed to be on the run, his tormented psyche becomes even more evident:

> Yelisey had watched the disappearance of swallows and then he had wished he could become the light, barely conscious body of a bird; but now he no longer thought of turning into a rook, because he could not think. He lived and looked with his eyes only because he possessed the documents of a middle peasant and his heart was beating in accord with the law.[483]

From this passage, and the fact that he had arrived at the pit running from some place, it is clear that Elisei is on the run from being dekulakised and this is where his nervousness stems from.

Elisei is a character easily dismissed in scholarly analyses of *The Foundation Pit* given that he plays a minor role in the overall plot of Platonov's novel. However, he is the only peasant whose thoughts the reader is given access to. Other peasant characters are either represented only through their physicality, such as peasants' physical reactions and utterances when being selected for dekulakisation.[484] Through Elisei the psyche of a peasant trying to escape collectivisation and forced displacement is depicted, and when he expresses to Chiklin that he does not feel sorry for the peasant Chiklin has just murdered,[485] it is difficult not to see that statement, not as truth, but as a means to avoid suspicion from the people close to the Activist. Unlike the peasants of the collective who "sense everything – only not ourselves" (quoted above), Elisei has been able to flee dekulakisation, which

[478] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 44; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 449
[479] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, pp. 57-58; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 460
[480] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 75; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 474
[481] All peasants in Platonov's novel are equipped with yellow eyes. This could be the result of liver damage or liver disease, such as hepatitis. Perhaps Platonov's use of this epithet is meant to highlight the poor health of the peasant classes, perhaps caused by heavy drinking.
[482] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 63; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 465
[483] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 75; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 475
[484] See for instance: Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, pp. 111-112; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, pp. 504-505
[485] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 78; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 477

means that he must prove himself to be a good proletarian in order to not get dekulakised. This, however, has implications for him as he is constantly aware of his surroundings and "listening to any sounds given out by the masses or by nature."[486] In this way, the proclamation by the collective, that they sense everything, turns into a threat to expose Elisei's true identity as a *seredniak*, hence Elisei has to be on guard for sounds made by the masses. In this way he must sense everything around him and endeavour to forget his self and his predicament to become a true proletarian, just like the collective. However, this turns out to be impossible for Elisei.

Because of his status as a former peasant, Elisei is given work that none of the other workers in the foundation pit wants to undertake. The nature of his work represents how he will never become a fully acknowledged proletarian, which is the cause of the general suspicion against the peasant class felt by the proletarians. Elisei emerges as a superfluous character, because he is prevented from conforming to society and therefore unable to take a useful place in society while he simultaneously is unable to change his situation. The cause of this are his documents which label him *seredniak*, that is, someone who, according to the Soviet metanarrative is likely to be collaborating with the *kulaki*. Simultaneously, he is on a quest to enter the realm of collective superfluity, as he tries to leave behind his self and join proletarian society. Elisei's superfluity is best exemplified in a scene where another (unnamed) peasant goes off to wash the dead peasants "to show his own concern and sympathy," Elisei "wandered off after him, not knowing where best to find himself [*ne znaya, gde emu luchshe vsego nakhoditsia*]"[487] indicating that he is unsure whether he fits in society with the peasants or with the proletarians who make the peasants suffer.

This scene also serves to underscore how Elisei is caught between two worlds in more than one way. He is a middle-peasant, whose defining quality is that he exists in-between poor peasants and well-off peasants. He is neither one nor the other, and this rule applies to his status among the workers at the pit as well, where he is both a proletarian and a middle peasant. In other words, he is a hybrid capable of expressing the views, thoughts, and feelings of two conflictual identities simultaneously. This is where the suspicion of him stems from, as the hybrid in Bhabha's words, as quoted in Chapter II, is "half acquiescent, half oppositional, always untrustworthy."[488]

With the representation of the alienated peasant-turned-proletarian and the proletarian searching for truth and meaning, Elisei and Voshchev, Platonov creates an image of Soviet-style self-colonisation in which a sense of self comes at a cost: If Elisei reveals his true self, or is exposed by

[486] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 75; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 475
[487] Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*, p. 77; Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, p. 476
[488] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 49

one of the others, he will be murdered or exiled. The alternative is represented in the collective speaking in unison: If Elisei is to succeed in proving himself to be a good proletarian, he must forget his self, his true identity. The juxtaposition of the representation of Elisei with the representation of the peasants being dekulakised is what underscores the relationship between sense of self and annihilation. *The Foundation Pit* is a work riddled with characters deprived of selfhood: Elisei and the dekulakised peasants are not the only ones, but also the collectivised peasants who almost exclusively speak in unison. Voshchev who is unable to conform to the Communist ideology, on the other hand, is given a free pass to search for truth (although no one is willing to help him with this) presumably because he was born a proletarian. While previously it was true Russianness connected with Orthodoxy, as defined in the Nationality Doctrine, which was the stamp most coveted in the Russian Empire, it was now the proletarian, the factory worker, who was the most desirable character. This represents a major change in the application of self-colonisation measures since the imperial era, but nonetheless underscores the implication of self-colonisation narratives on Russian literature even after the October revolution.

Chapter VII

Transferring Superfluity Between Worlds: The Impact of Documentary Prose in Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales*

> What appears to them [chuditsia] in the Siberian blizzard?
> What haunts them [mereshchitsia] in the lunar circle?
> I send my farewell greetings to them.[489]
>
> Anna Akhmatova, 1935

Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966) was one of the millions of Soviet citizens who were severely affected by the horrors of the Gulag. Although, the poet was never convicted to penal labour, her son, Lev Gumilev, spent years in the Gulag and her husband, Nikolai Punin, died there.[490] Akhmatova's cycle of poems, *Requiem* (*Rekviem*, written 1935-61, published in full in 1987[491]) was dedicated to the victims of Stalin's terror, but as the lines quoted above indicate, her view was one from the outside. Akhmatova's lyrical 'I' speaks for countless women standing in line outside of a Leningrad prison waiting for news regarding their loved ones. This famous scene invokes the sense of hopelessness and powerlessness that one could be struck with at the hands of the Soviet regime. As such, Akhmatova's poem can be said to express the sense of superfluity that many Soviet citizens must have felt when their relatives were sent to Siberia – a feeling which invokes memories of the wives of the Decembrists (see Chapter II). Using the term superfluity in relation to reality, rather than the world of literature, requires a different understanding of the term. The aim of this chapter is thus to transfer the trope of superfluity into the world of lived experiences. It will discuss superfluity in Varlam Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales* (1954-1973), especially in relation to the author's documentary prose, which enables the transferral of superfluity between worlds. It does so because documentary prose is a literary genre which is, at least in theory, the closest one can move toward actual reality within the realm of fiction.

Shalamov's tales in this context represent answers to the questions Akhmatova poses in her poem, as they show what the prisoners were feeling, what they saw, and how they survived (or did

---

[489] Anna Akhmatova, *Rekviem*, (New York: Tovorishchestvo zarubezhnykh pisatelei, 1969), p. 7

[490] For Anna Akhmatova's biography see Galina Rylkova, "No 'Room of her Own': Anna Akhmatova's Tenure in Soviet Culture," in Rylkova *The Archeaology of Anxiety: The Russian Silver Age and Its Legacy* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), pp. 66-107

[491] Some poems from the cycle were published during the Destalinisation years. A full version did not appear in the USSR until 1987.

not). It will be argued that the convicts were deemed superfluous prior to their arrival in the Gulag, and that the camps represent a world that is completely separate from all other worlds. This is in accordance with how Shalamov represents Kolyma in his tales. This also follows Fedor Dostoevskii's characterisation of the imperial-era labour camp from his work *Notes from the House of the Dead* (*Zapiski iz mertvogo doma*, 1860-62):

> On the other side of this gate lay a world of freedom and light, with people carrying on with their lives like everyone else. But those living on this side of the fence pictured this outside world as some kind of impossible fantasy. Here, on this side of the fence, there was a special world, unlike anything else, a world with its own special laws, its own dress code, its own practices and customs – a house of the living dead, with its own unique life and special inhabitants.[492]

In the Gulag-world there was no space for superfluity given that insurrection or rebellion would mean certain death for the prisoners. In line with Shalamov's depiction of the Gulag as a world separated from the society that established it, this chapter argues that the Gulag was a place where those who were deemed unfit, or superfluous, by authorities would be sent to be re-educated or slowly murdered.

Alexandr Solzhenitsyn viewed the prisoners in the *Gulag Archipelago* (*Arkhipelag GULag*, written 1958-1968. Published in the USSR in 1989), as the author names the system of Gulag camps, as a social class in its own right:

> …it is very easy to prove that the zeks [prisoners] of the Archipelago constitute a class of society. For, after all, this multitudinous group (of many millions) has a single (common to them all) relationship to production (namely: subordinate, attached, and without any right to direct that production). It also has a single common relationship to the distribution of the products of labor (namely: no relationship at all, receiving only that insignificant share of the products required for the meager support of their own existence). And, in addition, all their labor is no small thing, but one of the principal constituents of the whole state economy.[493]

People deemed superfluous by the Soviet authorities, were superfluous in the same way that the superfluous literary character was. That is, it was not their choice to become alienated, but rather that society decided that they were unnecessary based on their character traits, opinions, and actions. They were transferred to the separate world of the Gulag, and while they had been superfluous in Soviet

---

[492] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The House of the Dead* (Richmond: Alma Classics, 2018. Trans.: Roger Cockrell), p. 11

[493] Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, translated by Harry Willetts & Thomas P. Whitney, (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco & London: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 502

society, they became an immensely important part of the Soviet Union's economy through their production.

Traditionally the superfluous men were members of the aristocracy or the educated elite, who were alienated from society because of their inability to conform to the values of high society (see Chapter II). In a world that was highly hierarchical, however, a high-ranking person would only be stripped of their rank and punished with exile and hard labour in relation to specific crimes against society or against the Tsar; as was the case with the Decembrists. For the most part, people were not punished for their inability or refusal to conform. We see this in literature where superfluous men generally are not imprisoned or exiled.[494] In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, when ranks were abolished, the practise of sentencing superfluous people (or perhaps 'class enemies') to hard labour became much more common. Not only would superfluity take a different form in the Soviet Union, given its radically different ideology compared with the tsarist regime, but it would also take a different form within the closed world of the Gulag as it is represented in Shalamov's tales. This is a direct result of the classless society both inside and outside of the camps.

Specifically, the chapter will examine in detail how Shalamov portrayed life in the Kolyma camp in the far northeast of the Soviet Union, the furthest place from 'civilisation' one could travel inside Russian territory, and thus a very isolated world. It uses the literary trope of the superfluous man to determine if superfluity in the outside world would be transferred to the world inside the Gulag. It finds that the sense of superfluity among Shalamov's characters is profoundly related to their surroundings, i.e., nature and climate in Siberia's north-eastern region. The discrepancy between the non-conformist superfluous character and the conformist who highlights the superfluity of the protagonist does not exist in Shalamov's tales. This is due to the simple fact that if one does not follow the social rules amongst the prisoners or toward the guards, one is doomed to death. Traditionally in superfluous man literature, non-conformity exists in a symbiosis with conformity,[495] but Shalamov's tales deviate significantly from Chances' characterisation in that there is no room for non-conformity in his representation of the Gulag.

The chapter will begin by presenting a brief history of incarceration and hard labour in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, which will provide the context to the concept of superfluity in the world of lived experiences as evident in Shalamov's documentary prose. Furthermore, the chapter will explore this kind of superfluity, which is a continuation of the concept of collective superfluity

[494] Rodion Raskol'nikov might be the exception to this rule.
[495] See Chances, *Conformity's Children…*

as examined in the previous chapter, and its connection with the wider issues of this thesis surrounding the concept of self-colonisation. The Gulag is thus viewed as a mode of self-colonisation, given that it was a way for Soviet authorities to punish its own population for the crime of not adhering to the dominant ideology. Just as any other instance of self-colonisation in the Russian sphere, the Gulag was intricately linked with the internal colonisation of indigenous peoples who were displaced from their living spaces in order to make room for the camps. As Steven A. Barnes writes: "[t]he colonization of the periphery was part and parcel of the Stalinist revolution from above that sought to bring the fruits of socialist civilization to every corner of the Soviet Union."[496] From its foundation, the Gulag was a system that served multiple functions: it punished criminals, kept unwanted elements out of society, and it colonised territory.

To Colonise or to Punish?

Varlam Shalamov, the son of a priest, was working as a factory worker in Moscow in 1922, when he was only 15.[497] In 1927 he began studying law at the Lomonosov State University in Moscow where he became associated with a group of Trotskyites. He was accused of counterrevolutionary activity and sentenced to hard labour in 1929, aged 21. This was his first incarceration during which he served two years in a camp in the Urals. After his initial return to normal life in 1932, he began writing both poetry and prose, but he was not yet writing about his experiences in the Gulag. In 1937, during Stalin's purges, Shalamov was arrested again for counterrevolutionary activity and sentenced to five years of hard labour and later retried at court for having praised the émigré writer and Nobel laureate, Ivan Bunin, calling him a "classic Russian writer."[498] Shalamov lived and worked in Kolyma from 1937 to 1951, but was not allowed to return to Moscow until 1956. Already in 1954, however, Shalamov began working on *Kolyma Tales*, which quickly began circulating as *samizdat*. Some tales were smuggled to the United States where individual tales would be published in the 1970s before a Russian language edition was published in the United Kingdom in 1978. Shalamov died in 1982 and never saw the publication of his work in the Soviet Union, as they were not published until 1989 during the *Glasnost-Perestroika* period.[499]

Shalamov's tales open with the image of five or six people walking through virgin snow to beat down a path to be used for sleighs or tractors. This tale, "Through the Snow" ("Po snegu," 1956),

---

[496] Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: the Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 40
[497] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Varlam Shalamov," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 27 Jun. 2024
[498] Quoted in John Glad, "Foreword" in Varlam Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p. xiv
[499] Glad, "Foreword" pp. xiii-xv

sets the tone for the rest of the work in terms of Shalamov's documentary prose, as Elena Mikhailik argues:

> Shalamov's meticulous description of deteriorating body and soul imperceptibly persuades the reader that the half-starved, half-frozen and probably already dead narrator of the *Kolyma Tales* does not possess enough strength to provide anything but bare facts. Shalamov sets himself up not as an Orpheus, who ventured to Hell and came back, but as a Pluto, an integral part of the netherworld, describing his habitat in its own terms.[500]

Sarah J. Young argues that the opening tale challenges the reader's expectation of genre given its lack of clear demarcation of the men walking as prisoners (there are no shackles, fences or guards), while Leona Toker argues that "the snow becomes a blank page,"[501] on which even the weakest of individuals could leave their trace. In the end, the road that the prisoners are beating down through the snow makes way for larger modes of transport and the tale can be interpreted as an allegory to the Soviet efforts to develop, or colonise, Siberian regions through convict labour. This was not unlike the construction of St. Petersburg, which played a central role in the colonisation of the Neva Delta and which similarly used slave labour (see Chapter IV). As such, "Through the Snow" sets the tone for the rest of Shalamov's tales, but it also highlights the Soviet Empire's dual intentions with the Gulag as an institution: to punish individuals and use them as a labour force to develop and colonise the enormous countryside.

The formation of the Gulag as a major institution within the Soviet bureaucracy had its roots in the Muscovite era during which the practises of exiling (*ssylka*) and sentencing to hard labour (*katorga*) were formalised.[502] These two forms of convictions served the same two purposes: to punish and to colonise. This dual purpose continued in the Soviet Era and shows the interrelatedness of internal colonisation (in this case the displacement of indigenous peoples) and self-colonisation (the penal aspect of the camps). In literature this aspect of Russian labour camps was also represented in Anton Chekhov's *Sakhalin Island* (*Ostrov Sakhalin*, 1893-95). On Sakhalin Island indigenous peoples were brushed aside in the utilisation of convict labour to develop industry in the Easternmost region of the Russian Empire. Russification efforts and the spread of diseases by the Russian settlers devastated the indigenous Gilyak population on the Island. However, as Gould attests, Anton

---

[500] Elena Mikhailik, "Dostoyevsky and Shalamov: Orpheus and Pluto," *The Dostoyevsky Review*, vol. 1 (2000), p. 154

[501] Leona Toker, *Return from the Archipelago: Narratives of Gulag Survivors* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 5

[502] Alan Wood, *Russia's Frozen Frontier: A History of Siberia and the Russian Far East 1581-1991* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), pp. 119-123; Laura Piacentini and Judith Pallot, "'In Exile Imprisonment' in Russia," *The British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 54, no. 1 (Jan. 2014), pp. 22-23

Chekhov's notes from his trip to Sakhalin shows that he "was less troubled by the colonization of the Gilyak than he was by the impact of the penal system on the Russian convicts in Sakhalin."[503] This follows a typical pattern in Russian literature where the suffering of Russians is prioritised over the suffering of indigenous peoples.

From the very beginning, the Muscovite eastward movement of the colonisation frontiers posed problems especially relating to keeping control of and solidifying presence in the vast territories that the Empire was conquering. The territories conquered by the Empire were the dwellings of indigenous peoples with customs and cultures that would become part of the demography of the Empire, but which would also be subjected to Russification policies, Christianisation, and violence (see Introduction). Eventually, penal labour camps were established, while authorities made attempts at expanding serfdom to Siberia. The expansion of the Gulag to every corner of the Soviet Empire can be seen as a continuation of this process of colonising land through convict labour, given that, as we shall see, indigenous peoples were displaced to make way for labour camps in areas that were especially abundant in natural resources, or ideally located for agricultural development.

As the system of exile and hard labour was developed and formalised (simultaneously with the institution of serfdom in 1649), exiling convicts to Siberia was intended to aid in Russia's colonisation efforts in its Eastern territories. From the outset, this system was both a penal system meant to rid society of unwanted people, and a method of colonising and consolidating power over peripheral regions. This double-sidedness to Russia's and the Soviet Union's labour camp system, is what makes "Through the Snow" a clear allegory to the Gulag: the presence of prisoners shows the aspect of punishment inherent to the Gulag, while the road makes way for the Soviet ongoing colonisation efforts. As Jennifer Keating writes:

> Exile, whether to settlement or hard labor, was an act of expulsion: a means of isolating, punishing, and depriving guilty parties of civic rights. At the same time, it was also a mechanism to populate and exploit Russia's Siberian territories with ranks of convict settlers.[504]

In the imperial era, exile and hard labour became connected as the system of *katorga* was formalised by Peter I in 1696, but exile to hard labour in Siberia did not become common until 1767. The work that convicts would undertake in Siberia was typically in agriculture, factories, distilleries and

---

[503] Rebecca Gould, "The Aesthetic Terrain of Settler Colonialism: Katherine Mansfield and Anton Chekhov's Natives," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2019), p. 56

[504] Jennifer Keating, "Place, Power, and Experience in Tsarist Exile," *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 19, no. 4 (Fall 2018), p. 850

mines,[505] which were also typical forms of convict labour in the Soviet Era. The thought behind these methods in the imperial era was that instead of sentencing someone to death, they could be utilised in the agricultural and mining industries in Siberia. However, as Alan Wood points out, many of these exiles were common criminals with little motivation to work, and there did not exist a functional system of surveillance around the penal colonies, meaning that escape was common.[506]

Punishments were in some cases accompanied with what Daniel Beer calls 'civil death,' meaning that convicts were stripped of their civil rights and rank, which included a ceremonial civil execution where the convict was humiliated at the scaffold.[507] This famously happened to both Radishchev (whose *magnum opus* is discussed in Chapter I) and many Decembrists in the wake of the failed Decembrist revolt in 1825 (see Chapter II).[508] The civil death imposed on the convicts included any spouse who might follow their (typically) husbands into exile. As Beer argues, civil executions served to consolidate authoritarian power and incite fear in the public;[509] the subsequent discharge of convicts to Siberia shows the interconnections between state power, the will to colonise land, and to rid European Russia of people deemed unwanted or, in the terminology of this chapter, superfluous. It also speaks to how superfluity in the real world worked differently in the two eras in question. In the Soviet Era, ranks were abolished, and as such there was no formal difference between individuals. As such, 'civil deaths' remained, given that the stamps of *kulak* or class enemy could be applied to a person, which represented betrayal against the ruling proletariat.

As Willard Sunderland argues, the Russian imperial government had, throughout the centuries, varying degrees of control over the mobility of its people.[510] This is best exemplified in the institution of serfdom, although as Sunderland further argues: "the arrival of serfdom only underscored the obvious: it was the tsar who held ultimate authority over mobility in the realm – that of the peasants as well as their owners."[511] Serf owners were given permission to banish their male serfs to Siberia if they were deemed to have broken the rules in some way or another. These serfs had to live up to certain criteria: they had to be healthy and under the age of 45; potential wives of the

---

[505] Wood, *Russia's Frozen Frontier...* p. 66; Andrew Gentes, "*Katorga*: Penal Labour and Tsarist Russia," *ASEES*, vol. 18, nos. 1-2 (2004), p. 41
[506] Wood, *Russia's Frozen Frontier...* pp. 121-123
[507] Daniel Beer, "Civil Death, Radical Protest, and the Theatre of Punishment in the Reign of Alexander II," *Past and Present*, vol. 250 (Feb. 2021), pp. 171-173
[508] Beer, "Civil Death…" p. 184
[509] Beer, "Civil Death… p. 173
[510] Willard Sunderland, "Catherine's Dilemma: Resettlement and Power in Russia, 1500s–1914" in Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen (eds.), *Globalising Migration History: The Eurasian Experience (16th-21st Centuries)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), p. 57
[511] Sunderland, "Catherine's Dilemma…" p. 61

banished peasants would follow their husbands. However, the system did not work as it was intended, primarily due to the obvious fact that serf owners would not want to send their best workers away, and in actuality often sent serfs who did not live up to the criteria defined by the government, resulting in poorer workers being exiled to Siberia.[512] However, the system's power over the mobility of the people became much more far-reaching in the Soviet era since technological advances meant that surveillance of citizens was much easier. Potentially anyone who expressed counterrevolutionary notions or acted against the regime in any way, was at risk to be sent to Siberia. As such, the power to move its population by force became one of the key components of Soviet power. This included all levels of society and further underscores how the number of citizens deemed superfluous greatly increased as the Soviet Empire developed into a totalitarian state.

The establishment of the Gulag was a reaction to various factors, such as overcrowding prisons[513] in the wake of Lenin's Red Terror (political repression and executions carried out between 1918 and 1922) that specifically targeted landowners, merchants, and capitalists. As Barnes argues:

> The Gulag emerged as the concrete historical response to a number of contingent factors, including the tsarist experience with forced labor, the late nineteenth-century invention of the concentration camp, the crime and chaos of a period of revolution and civil war, and the attempt to industrialize rapidly a backward peasant economy to prepare it for an anticipated war with capitalist powers.[514]

However, as Anne Applebaum points out, there seemed to have been no plan with regards to these convicts' future in the labour camps: "The prisoners were to carry out labour – but to what end? Was labour meant to re-educate the prisoners? Was it meant to humiliate them? Or was it meant to rebuild the new Soviet state?"[515] In 1919, it was suggested by officials that camps should re-educate the bourgeoisie through hard labour, but that was not followed up in the camps where guards would consistently humiliate the prisoners.[516] During the Stalinist period, however, it became clearer what the point with the Gulag was, as Barnes writes: "In the harsh conditions of the Gulag, the social body's filth would either be purified (and returned to the body politic) or cast out (through death)."[517]

[512] Wood, *Russia's Frozen Frontier…* p. 68
[513] Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 27-31
[514] Steven A. Barnes, *Death and Redemption: the Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 11
[515] Applebaum, *Gulag…* p. 32
[516] Applebaum, *Gulag…* pp. 33-34
[517] Barnes, *Death and Redemption…* p. 14

Like much else during the early days of the Soviet Union, the system of labour camps was characterised by much uncertainty. Initially, it was an ad hoc solution to the pronounced desire of the Bolsheviks to punish and humiliate the people previously in power. Later, as the system developed, it became more about re-educating convicts according to Bolshevik principles, especially relating to the New Soviet Human (see Chapter V), while keeping those deemed superfluous, and not reformable within Bolshevik ideology, out of established society. Thus, there was a double-sided nature, even within the penal aspects of the Gulag: re-education or, if re-education seemed impossible, labour and slow death.

These two aspects of exiling convicts worked alongside the intention of colonising internal yet remote regions of the Empire. Camps were usually set up in peripheral regions that were rich in natural resources or had ideal conditions for agricultural development. As Judith Pallot points out, camps "were intended to become centres of colonisation of 'their' regions," while prisoners serving sentences of more than three years, were given incentives to stay in the region in the form of land grants.[518] There was thus a clear, although perhaps secondary, purpose of the Gulag, in the form of colonising, 'civilising,' and developing the peripheral regions of the Soviet Empire, as Applebaum argues:

> …the Gulag was slowly bringing 'civilisation' – if that is what it can be called – to the remote wilderness. Roads were being built where there had been only forest, houses were appearing in the swamps. Native peoples were being pushed aside to make way for cities, factories and railways.[519]

The Gulag thus serves as an excellent example of the intricacies of self-colonisation and internal colonisation. The Gulag was first and foremost an institution designed to punish criminals and class enemies, but also to re-educate, or 'civilise', the Soviet Union's population. The construction and expansion of camps came at the expense of the indigenous population in the areas in which the Gulag camps were located. The system is in summation the prime example of how the Soviet empire functioned – it shows how authorities subjugated Soviet citizens and indigenous peoples in peripheral areas to inferior statuses based in a specific ideological doctrine. The people sent to these camps, were adjudged to be superfluous for the class struggle against the bourgeoisie, and as such would not benefit general society. Therefore, it was better to get rid of them, which the Soviet regime had the

---

[518] Judith Pallot, "Forced Labour for Forestry: The Twentieth Century History of Colonisation and Settlement in the North of Perm' Oblast" *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 54, no. 7 (Nov. 2002), p. 1060
[519] Applebaum, *Gulag*… pp. 100-101

power to do. Shalamov manages to condense all of this into a single image of prisoners beating down virgin snow in the Siberian frost. The tale ends with the words:

> Each of them – even the smallest and the weakest – must beat down a section of virgin snow, and not simply follow in another's footsteps. Later will come tractors and horses driven by readers, instead of authors and poets.[520]

Not only does this reiterate the image of the Gulag as a dual-purpose enterprise, but it also shows Shalamov's preoccupation with writers, poets, and intellectuals in the Gulag, while foregrounding his thoughts on prose after the twentieth-century horrors of Auschwitz and Kolyma. Closer to my argumentation, however, this passage shows how Soviet authorities utilised the superfluous people in shackles as prisoners, which reveals their status as outcasts. Beating down the snow with their footsteps, they are doing this work, not at their own accord, but on the order of the imperial decree. They are superfluous people made useful.

Writing after Kolyma: Shalamov's 'Documentary Prose' and the Superfluous Snake Charmer

Shalamov's tales are remarkable for their bleak pessimism and laconic style. Every tale is a new narrative with new characters "without biography, with no past or future...."[521] They only exist in the present, which is underscored by the many instances of tales ending in someone's (implied) death, such as in the story "An Individual Assignment" ("Odinochnyi zamer," 1955): "There had been no reason for him to exhaust himself on this his last day."[522] As Svetlana Boym writes:

> There is something radically inassimilable in Shalamov's prose: it confronts the experience of extremity but does not offer redemption through labor, suffering, religion, or national belonging. It proceeds through precise descriptions of life in the gulag, paying close attention to the historical facts, yet presents no history of the camps.[523]

---

[520] Varlam Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 4; Varlam Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange, 1978), p. 17

[521] Shalamov, "O moei proze" quoted in Violeta Davoliute, "Shalamov's Memory" *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, vol. 47, no. ½ (March-June 2005), p. 4.

[522] Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 24; Shalmov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, p. 36

[523] Svetlana Boym, "'Banality of Evil,' Mimicry, and the Soviet Subject: Varlam Shalamov and Hannah Arendt," *Slavic Review*, vol. 67, no. 2 (Summer 2008), p. 342

Shalamov's style has been variably labelled 'new prose' or 'documentary prose,' both relating to the idea of mixture of fact and fiction.[524] This idea of a new type of prose was formulated by Shalamov himself in his essay "About My Prose (1971)," in which he argued that:

> …a person of the second half of the twentieth century, a person who survived wars, revolutions, the fires of Hiroshima, the atomic bomb, treachery, [and] most importantly (…) the shame of Kolyma and the Auschwitz ovens, (…) simply cannot but approach the questions of art differently than before.
>
> God has died. Why should art live? Art has also died, and no forces in the world will resurrect the Tolstoian novel.[525]

The horrors of Auschwitz and Kolyma, which Shalamov here group together, are thus causes to rethink art or, more specifically, the author's artistic production. Additionally, it is a rejection of the style of *ostranenie*, or defamiliarization, as Leona Toker argues.[526] Documentary prose rejects the notion of *ostranenie*, or the practise of the author's self-alienation from the object they are describing, as it puts the narrator at the centre of the story. "The writing called for by the new reality could no longer be approached with the methods of conventional psychological literature, no matter how refined,"[527] Victor Zaslavsky argues. Instead, writing should move even closer to reality than traditional realist fiction did. It should be based on the author's own experiences to the extent that the author should take active part in the events of the narrative.

Using his own work as example, Shalamov presents the idea of "not documentary prose, but prose experienced as a document…" and continues "the 'Kolyma Tales' are beyond art, and yet they have artistic and documentary power at the same time."[528] As Toker argues, the author of 'documentary prose,' does not simply observe the documented events, but take active part in them.[529] And this is exactly where Shalamov's documentary prose, differs from realist works of literature in which the author creates events that could within reasonable probability have happened in the real world. In Shalamov's prose, and other works of memory literature, events are presented as the author remembers them. However, as Michael Rothberg's idea of "multidirectional memory" attests,

---

[524] See Davoliute, "Shalamov's Memory," pp. 1-21 for a discussion on Shalamov's prose and its relation to fact and memory.
[525] Shalamov, "O moei proze"
[526] Leona Toker, "Varlam Shalamov's Kolyma" in Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine (eds.), *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993) p. 154
[527] Victor Zaslavsky, "Shalamov's New Prose," *Society*, vol. 59 (2022), p. 280
[528] Shalamov, "O moei proze"
[529] Leona Toker, "Toward a Poetics of Documentary Prose – From the Perspective of Gulag Testimonies," *Poetics Today*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Summer 1997), p. 208

memory is just as selective a process as realist writing: "[memory is] subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative."[530] However, in Antoine Compagnon's discussion of authorial intent it is argued that "the most reliable witness of the author, is none other than the author himself."[531] Jacques Derrida would later return to this idea of authors as witnesses and conclude that "no one does in fact bear witness for the witness, no one can, it is true, but first of all because no one should."[532] So, in Shalamov's documentary prose, which is as close to reality as one can come within the world of literature, it is Shalamov's memory that the tales are based on. But memory is selective and unreliable, and although Shalamov is the best possible witness, the only witness, to his experiences in the Gulag, his stories nonetheless invoke the question of the role of the author in documentary prose.

According to Josefina Lundblad-Janjic, Shalamov interpreted his own role as a storyteller as one who had the responsibility to narrate about the intelligentsia's experience in the Gulag. Not so much because they suffered more than others, but because "only Mandel'stam could write Mandel'stam's poetry,"[533] as Lundblad-Janjic puts it, referring to another victim of Soviet political repression. Lundblad-Janjic specifically refers to Shalamov's story, "The Snake Charmer" ("Zaklinatel' zmei," 1954), to give this assessment, in which the narrator tells the story of his friend Andrey Platonov, a not-coincidental namesake of the famous author. Platonov tells the narrator about how he, in a different camp, used to recite novels to the other prisoners in exchange for soup. "I'll write a story about it. I even have a title: 'The Snake Charmer.' How do you like it?" Platonov asks the narrator. "It's good, but first you have to survive,"[534] the narrator responds. Platonov does not survive, and instead the narrator takes it on himself to write Platonov's novel.

Before the narrative unfolds, the narrator reminds the reader of the horrible conditions under which the prisoners live, but also the prisoners' impeccable will to survive.

> Perhaps he lives by virtue of his hopes? But he doesn't have any hope. He is saved by a drive for self-preservation, a tenacious clinging to life, a physical tenacity to which his entire consciousness is subordinated.[535]

---

[530] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009)

[531] Antoine Compagnon, *Literature, Theory, and Common Sense*, translated by Carol Cosman (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004) p. 50

[532] Jacques Derrida, "'A Self-Unsealing Poetic Text': Poetics and Politics of Witnessing" in Michael P. Clark (ed.), *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 198

[533] Josefina Lundblad-Janjic, "Rethinking the Writer's Duty: Varlam Shalamov's Kolyma Tales and the Russian Intelligentsia in the Gulag," *Partial Answers*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2021), p. 85

[534] Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 87; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, p. 119

[535] Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 88; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, p. 121

The narrative then shows Platonov under the threat of violence from the other inmates accepting to recite a novel to them at night. Thus, it becomes clear that Platonov merely does this to survive and avoid a beating. He tells stories in exchange for food and protection, which becomes clear at the end of the story, where someone threatens him before someone else intercedes.

"The Snake Charmer" is the story of one witness bearing witness for another who is incapable of doing so. However, it is also an expression of Shalamov's approach to writing prose after Kolyma, as Lundblad-Janjic argues:

> In this way, Shalamov steps into the role of Plato as he attempts to show that the only way we can gain access to this space is through the unseeable realms of other people's stories — and he writes as if he always hopes that the reader will never see it. As life beyond [Plato's allegory of] the cave is enigmatic and elusive to those who have only seen shadows of it, the Gulag may only be guessed at through the fragments that can be expressed in words.[536]

In writing his stories, Shalamov was preserving the memory of what happened to him and countless others in Kolyma. He did it through the medium of short prose which he himself freed from the constraints of traditional genres because the horrors of the twentieth century, which he himself witnessed, forced him to rethink his role as an author. He brought enlightenment, or at least awareness, to those who would read his stories, and this is something the narrator in "The Snake Charmer" also expresses:

> "…he would acquaint them with real literature, become an enlightener. Even here at the very bottom of the barrel of life he would awaken their interest in the literary word, fulfill [*sic.*] his calling, his duty."[537]

However, the role of the storyteller within the closed world of the Gulag is much different than that of the storyteller in the 'real' world. A story is not simply told there to enlighten people – the overarching intention with any action there, is always survival in Shalamov's tales. As such, Platonov's job as a storyteller is, put simply, a means of survival. The title of the story, "The Snake Charmer," confirms this as well: his stories keep the snakes from attacking him. And as the narrator assesses:

---

[536] Josefina Lundblad-Janjic, "Rethinking…" pp. 87-88

[537] Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 91; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, p. 124

> Platonov could not bring himself to admit that he would simply be fed, receive an extra bowl of soup – not for carrying out the slop pail but for a different, a more noble labor. But was it so noble? After all it was more like scratching a thief's dirty heels than enlightenment.[538]

This underscores Shalamov's creation of a world different from the real one, or perhaps how he saw the Gulag itself as a separated, apocalyptic otherworldly entity. This is further underscored by the narrator's assessment of Platonov's character: "I loved Platonov because he didn't lose interest in life beyond the blue seas and tall mountains – the life from which we were separated by so many miles and years. We'd almost ceased believing in the existence of that life…"[539] Ultimately, Platonov tells his tales to survive, but they are simultaneously an expression of his longing for the world beyond the fences of the Gulag.

Telling stories after Kolyma becomes an act of resistance, a way to resist superfluity in the afterlife. While Shalamov's stories were suppressed in his home country, they were read outside of the Soviet Union during his lifetime and made people in the West aware of the hardships of the prisoners in Siberia's permafrozen world.

The Frostbitten Inmates of *Kolyma Tales* and their Sense of Superfluity

Throughout Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales*, the climate and freezing temperatures of Siberia's north-eastern region are integral themes. In the tale "A Pushover Job" ("Kant," 1956), however, soothing signs of nature in the form of dwarf cedar trees are presented to the reader. This tree was the only tree that would always remain green in the otherwise frozen and dead climate of Kolyma. "In the midst of this pitiless winter and gloomy spring, the dwarf cedar would gleam blindingly clear and green."[540] The tree itself, it turns out, was important in other ways for the prisoners in Kolyma: They used it as a source of vitamin C and a cure for scurvy. The cedar needles were boiled down to an extract and served to prisoners before dinner. Not only was its flavour vile and spoiled their appetite, "[i]t was ultimately proved that this preparation was completely ineffective…"[541] Thus, the job of picking needles from cedar trees is utterly meaningless and superfluous. None of the inmates appreciated it given its vile taste, and no one, so we are told, benefitted from it.

The tale is not about this vile substance as a source of vitamin C, but instead it tells the story of a weakened convict who is assigned to what is recognized as the easiest job in Kolyma: picking

---

538 Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 91; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, p. 124
539 Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 87; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, p. 120
540 Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 27; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, p. 50
541 Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 28; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, pp. 50-51

needles from dwarf cedars. Even this relatively easy job, however, became almost unbearable due to the freezing conditions. "…I couldn't work faster. There was a ringing in my ears, and my fingers, frostbitten at the beginning of winter, ached with a familiar dull pain."[542] Harriet Hustis and Maria Mostyka discuss the trope of frostbite in Shalamov's tales, and argue that:

> In his stories, Shalamov seeks to forge a "new prose" in which the Gulag's unthinkable and seemingly incommunicable tensions between memory, history, and identity are articulated through the wound of frostbite. This wound is represented literally, as the most common form of physical suffering endured by inmates of Kolyma, and figuratively, as the textured numbness of emotional indifference.[543]

Hustis and Mostyka argue for what they call psychological frostbite, or Gulag induced numbness. It is the phenomenon in which Shalamov's narrators feel indifferent toward their own experiences because they, like the characters they describe, are struck with numbness resulting from their stay in the Gulag. What is interesting with this phenomenon as it develops throughout Shalamov's tales, is that it is not bullets or daggers that wounds the prisoners or pierce their bones, but more prosaically, the climate and freezing temperatures. Toker argues that nature and the authorities form a conspiracy against the convicts: "Nature's part in the 'conspiracy' lay in that its harshness was not only one of the circumstances determining the poor quality of life but also an aversive factor that forced the prisoners to work even more effectively than under other rods of aversive control."[544] In other words, the climate is used by the authorities to break the spirit of the convicts, to torture them and subsequently kill them: the climate is used as a mode of punishment. The prisoners have been made superfluous at the hands of the Soviet authorities who take advantage of the extreme climate as a means for torture. Frostbite, in this sense, performs as a stand-in for guards' weapons as authorities take advantage of nature to which the prisoners are powerless.

The connection between superfluity and the cold climate of Siberia's remoteness, is accentuated in the story "A Child's Drawings" ("Detskie kartinki," 1959) where the narrator notes: "Nature in the north is not impersonal or indifferent; it is in conspiracy with those who sent us here."[545] This does not merely accentuate the fact that the authorities obviously knew what hellish environment they were sending the convicts into, but the perception from the prisoners' points of

---

[542] Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 29; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, p. 52

[543] Harriet Hustis & Maria Mostyka, "The Art of Indifference in Shalamov's Kolyma Tales," *The Russian Review*, vol. 76 (Oct. 2017), p. 733

[544] Toker, "Varlam Shalamov's Kolyma," p. 155

[545] Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 76; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, p. 94

view that nature and Soviet authorities were conspiring together. There is no doubt that the sense of superfluity is related to the climate and harsh conditions. But the conspiracy goes deeper than just the climate: one could argue that it is between the authorities and geography more widely. Not only did authorities use the climate to alienate the prisoners, they also knowingly sent them to the most remote regions of the Empire to create an even bigger sense of detachedness from civilisation.

The Gulag as a system of camps is never mentioned explicitly in Shalamov's tales: there is only one camp in Shalamov's world endowed with paradigmatic characteristics. There is no reason to mention other camps as each camp is a world closed off from all other worlds. The detachedness from society and other camps only serves to underscore the sense of superfluity; there is no reason to engage with other worlds since other worlds are inaccessible to the characters of the tales. This results in a rather indifferent narrative, in which conditions and events are not characterised as extreme, even though they clearly are. As Hustis and Mostyka argue:

> …Shalamov will represent indifference as a figurative form of "frostbite" – a psychological "wound" characteristic of the experience of Kolyma; these stories will examine the feeling and texture of Gulag-induced numbness in order to reflect on its implications for the Kolyma survivor-turned-writer.[546]

That is, the sense of superfluity, or indifference, was paramount to the experience of being incarcerated in Shalamov's Gulag, and even its narrators have been struck by the Gulag induced sense of superfluity. In "A Pushover Job" this indifference is clear in the language of the narrator too, as the story ends with the matter-of-fact statement: "We barely arrived in time to get our soup. No meat or vegetables were given for such light work."[547] The frostbite, induced in a conspiracy between nature and authorities, prevents the narrator from describing his powerlessness to the conspiracy, and only has the energy to make factual statements, such as not receiving meat or vegetables for dinner.

The psychological implications of the perpetual freezing temperatures are described in the story, "Carpenters," ("Plotniki," 1954) which is about two workers volunteering for work in the indoor wood shop. None of them are qualified carpenters, even though the guard demands them to be. In the end, they are allowed to stay in there for two days by the other carpenters, before they return to their outdoor work. They are relieved to be working in the wood shop, not just because they get to stay warm for a few days, but because they are able to escape the emotional indifference that the conspiracy between nature and authorities had inflicted upon them:

---

[546] Hustis & Mostyka, "The Art of Indifference…" p. 735

[547] Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 30; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, p. 53

> …total indifference written on every face. He bore no grudge for people's indifference, for he had long since comprehended the source of that spiritual dullness. The same frost that transformed a man's spit into ice in mid-air also penetrated the soul. If bones could freeze, then the brain could also be dulled and the soul could freeze over. And the soul shuddered and froze – perhaps to remain frozen for ever.[548]

That they are only able to escape the cold temporarily highlights the powerlessness of the prisoners in Kolyma to change their spiritual dullness, emotional indifference, or psychological frostbite. The frost (and resulting frostbite) cannot be escaped, or otherwise fought with what was usually available to the prisoners. That is, superfluity in Kolyma was not a result of personal incapacities, but rather the result of their natural environment in which freezing temperatures and strong winds were common occurrences, and to which they were completely powerless.

In "On Tick" ("Na predstavku," 1956), however, we see a prisoner who possesses a woollen sweater he wears everyday under his prison uniform. It was a gift from his wife upon his departure. The story sees inmates playing cards for each other's belongings, they soon play 'on tick,' or on credit. Naumov, who has been losing, tries to get the other inmates to give him credit in the form of their belongings, but no one has anything; apart from Garkunov with the sweater. He quickly refuses to give away his sweater as credit, but to no avail. The others force it off him. The narrator, at the end of the story, then implies the death of Garkunov, by noting that "[n]ow I had to find a new partner to cut wood with."[549] Garkunov's death, however, ensured, at least for now, the survival of another, and underscores that in Kolyma it was 'every man for himself.' There was little to no comradery, since everyone was perpetually on the brink of death fighting for their own survival, as the narrator states in "An Individual Assignment: "Cold, hunger, and sleeplessness rendered friendship impossible (…). For friendship to be friendship, its foundation had to be laid before living emotion was left to a man…"[550] Losing a game of cards could be a death sentence, while winning it could mean an easier path to survival. Like the storyteller in "The Snake Charmer" telling stories for soup, easing his conditions through extra food, this food must have been taken from someone else, although it is not stated by the narrator. The storyteller survives, but someone else dies.

Garkunov's sweater shows how the inmates were powerless, not only to the cold, but also to the social rules among the inmates. Normally, in superfluous man literature, there exist the concepts of conformity and non-conformity. But in Shalamov's tales everyone is a non-conformist, expelled

[548] Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 17; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, pp. 29-30
[549] Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 10; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, p. 24
[550] Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, p. 22; Shalamov, *Kolymskie rasskazy*, p. 34

from society to the most remote region of the Soviet Empire. The superfluous man's alienation is normally highlighted by conformist characters, however, within the camp there is no space for superfluity given that everyone is already superfluous and there exists no contrast between conformity and non-conformity. This has implications for Shalamov's characters as well, as the general rule is 'every man for himself,' while there is no alternative to this rule. If one does not follow, they die. The characters of Shalamov's tales are not superfluous in relation with others, they are rather superfluous to the bureaucracy that sent them to Siberia's remoteness taking advantage of the extreme conditions which would put the prisoners at the very edge of existence.

The October Revolution and the post-revolutionary era politics were deeply concerned with the values that the Soviet public should adhere to. The proletarian and communal ideals meant the erasure of individuality, and those who could not, or would not, give up their individual self were cast as superfluous. In this way the stamp of superfluity represented a mode of self-colonisation. Soviet-style self-colonisation represented an obsession with bettering the self in the self/other-dichotomy and required an acute sense of 'self'-awareness. That is, in order to determine how to improve, or 'civilise', the self, one had to determine what the self was. In Soviet discourse this resulted in the peasantry being cast as *kulaki* and political opponents (dissidents) were cast as superfluous. This practise was not much different from the self-colonisational practises in the Russian Empire, although they were based on vastly different ideological ideals.

These practises resulted, as I have argued, in a collective sense of superfluity in which the sense of selfhood was completely lost. Paradoxically, in the closed world of Shalamov's representation of the Gulag, selfhood was at the forefront of the stories. Every character is described individually meaning that the superfluity ascribed to Shalamov's convicts in the world of lived experiences, vanishes as soon as they entered the author's narrative. Consequently, there was no room for superfluity, in the form of non-conformity, in the world of the Gulag. Instead, what made Shalamov's characters superfluous was instead the long arm of the Empire, which had put them in Kolyma's surroundings with extreme climate and weather phenomena. Here, the authorities took advantage of this in their lengthy torture of people they deemed to be superfluous.

Towards a Conclusion:
Tracking the Development of Superfluity and Self-Colonisation

When this thesis began tracking the development of superfluity in relation to the narratives of self-colonisation it did so by suggesting that Radishchev's traveller-narrator represents the origin of the superfluous man. This character, along with Pechorin and Fliagin, were seen as individual characters with superfluous characteristics, who should both be studied much closer to the trope of empire. Such readings were conducted and resulted in the exposure of the superfluous man's colonising characteristics, which have not been presented before in academia. In fact, Orientalism and racism seemed to be key characteristics of Pechorin and Fliagin, who both were presented as victims at the expense of indigenous populations in Russia's peripheries. This trope, which is the core of self-colonisation narratives, takes offence at the suffering of Russians (both nobles and peasants), and not only ignores, but misuses representations of indigenous populations to highlight the suffering of Russians. In Belyi's *Petersburg*, I presented another example of such a narrative, which used highly racist language to represent the workers of Vasilevskii Island with.

This narrative did not develop much over the imperial era but changed rather dramatically in dissident literature written in the Soviet era. The narratives of self-colonisation were brought much closer to home in my reading of Bulgakov's *A Dog's Heart*, while it was placed in the countryside in Platonov's novel. In Shalamov's novel, the impact of self-colonisation measures on the convicts of the Gulag was brought to the most isolated corner of the Empire. Thus, self-colonisation policies as represented in these three works, reaches far and wide across the whole Empire. However, what is most striking in the development of self-colonisation narratives in the Soviet era, is that tropes of self-Orientalism and self-othering changed, as they were no longer connected with race, but rather with class. That is not to say that indigenous peoples were not suffering at the hands of the Soviet Empire, but rather that the representation of indigenous peoples was not present in the works of literature studied in Part II of this dissertation. This shift in concern over class, rather than race, meant that it was no longer Russianness, but rather proletarianism which was the ideal. This meant that masses and masses of people were cast as superfluous given that they could not live up to the criteria set out by the Soviet decree. As such, this was represented in Platonov's and Shalamov's works as 'collective superfluity' changing the notion of the trope altogether.

The title of this dissertation plays on the double-sidedness of the concept of superfluity and issues of Russian colonialism (external-, internal, and self-colonisation). It can be understood as

creating a distinction between the superfluous man and the colonised peoples, but it can also be understood as referring to those who are both superfluous and (self-)colonised, which is the case for the peasant masses and the Soviet citizens deemed unfit for society. As the concept of superfluity over the course of this dissertation slowly emerged as self-colonisation, the notion of superfluity changed dramatically since the main victims of self-colonisation were the peasantry. This was seen both in the form of the institution of serfdom and the process of dekulakisation.

In the following, I will present what I see as the potential implications of the theoretical discussions in this dissertation. I will present what I see as my main findings, while considering the potential impact of these findings, before presenting some thoughts on the future of self-colonisation theory.

The Superfluous and the Colonised

The concept of self-colonisation as it has been described in this thesis, is based on the works of Etkind,[551] but has taken into account the pitfalls of the scholar's approach which has been highlighted by many academics.[552] The concerns many scholars share regarding self-colonisation theory can be summarised to the dictum presented by Koplatadze: "Enquir[ies] into Russia's postcoloniality should not be undertaken at the expense of Russia's colonial subjects being discursively pitted against the Russians in a contest of victimhood."[553] Such sentiments have, however, resulted in a hesitance amongst scholars to engage with issues of self-colonisation. It is my hope that the approach I have used in this dissertation can change the perception of self-colonisation theory, as I believe I have shown that it can be used to examine and highlight incongruities in Russian narratives of suffering. The analyses in this dissertation have shown a remarkable tendency in Russian literature to take offence at the suffering of Russians, while being indifferent to the suffering of indigenous populations. Furthermore, this dissertation has shed light on the fact that, while self-colonisation in fact exists, in my view, it can also be misused as a narrative with a specific function and a specific aim: namely, to highlight the suffering of Russians at the expense of indigenous colonised populations.

---

[551] See for instance, Etkind, "Fuko i tezis…" pp. 50-73; Etkind, "Orientalism Reversed…" pp. 617-622; Etkind, *Internal Colonization…* and Etkind, "How Russia…" pp. 159-172

[552] Fournier, "Reflective Colonization…" pp. 519-537; Koplatadze, "Theorising Russian…" pp. 469-489; Gusejnova, "Alexander Etkind…" pp. 127–130; Jersild, "Internal Colonization…" pp. 1636–1637; Khalid, "Internal Colonization…" pp. 905–907; Lounsbery, "Internal Colonization…" pp. 157–160; Morrison, "Internal Colonization…" pp. 445-457

[553] Koplatadze, "Theorising Russian…" p. 475

While being concerned with narratives of self-othering and self-Orientalism, which were the natural results of the use of self-colonisation theory, the thesis also tracked the development of the concept of the superfluous man in an effort to decolonise the use of the term. The superfluous man is generally understood as an individual who suffers from his own shortcomings in relations with others. He is a self-reflexive and educated member of the nobility but finds it difficult to accept the social norms of high society.[554] However, in spite of his noble status, he has never properly been acknowledged as a coloniser, even though he will have played some form of role in the structures of the Russian Empire. That is, even if he did not, like Pechorin, take part in the colonisation of new territories, the superfluous man will have taken advantage of his position to reap the rewards of the hardworking peasantry living just beyond the borders of the Empire's metropoles. This analytical gap, may be due to the fact that superfluous men often are represented as victims of the despotic reign of Nicholas I. However, given his noble status, it is difficult not to acknowledge his inherent privilege.

The connection between superfluity and self-colonisation was first introduced in Chapter I, where Radishchev's fictional travel account, it was argued, exposed the Russian Empire as a doubly colonising Empire that colonised indigenous peoples caught by Russian expansion and colonised itself at the core of the Empire through the institution of serfdom. Simultaneously, Radishchev in *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*, created a noble character to highlight the problems that the Russian Empire faced, as many authors would do after him. Radishchev's traveller was an inactive character who stumbled upon stories which advanced him on his spiritual journey and opened his eyes to the suffering of the peasantry who resided in the space between Russia's two capitals.[555] Radishchev's work, like Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* and Leskov's *The Enchanted Wanderer* would later do, juxtaposes the superfluous character with the ongoing internal colonisation efforts conducted by the Empire.

Radishchev and the self-orientalist way in which he characterised the Empire, is the first indication that the superfluous man is inextricably linked with the Empire, which was characterised by centuries of external-, internal-, and self-colonisation.[556] The work consistently orientalises central Russia as the traveller is moving through, which contributes to the image of Russia as a 'barbaric' space in need of civilisation, which resembled the imperial decree. However, Radishchev turned the discourse on its head by pointing the finger at Empress Catherine II and the citizens of St. Petersburg,

---

[554] See for instance, Armstrong, "The True Origins…" pp. 279-296; Chances, *Conformity's Children…*; Chances "The Superfluous Man…" pp. 111-122; Gheith, "The Superfluous Man…" pp. 226-244; Seeley, "The Heyday…" pp. 92-112; Yilmaz & Kamalova: "A Superfluous Man…" pp. 123-136; Nayki, "Anticipating the Existentialist…" pp. 183-192
[555] Sobol, "Internal Orientalism…" pp. 249-261
[556] Etkind, *Internal Colonization…*

the most culturally Westernised (and therefore civilised within the imperialist worldview) space in the entire Empire. What is striking about Radishchev's traveller-narrator is not that he criticises Russian imperial institutions, but rather that he finds any chance of change impossible. In this way Radishchev becomes an early creator of a superfluous character, but also the first author to intricately connect this character to the issues facing the Empire.

Chapter II follows the development of self-colonisation in the first half of the nineteenth century, which was marked by the Napoleonic Wars and the Decembrist uprising. It shows a connection between the superfluous men, represented in Pechorin, and the Decembrists but sees a much more compelling connection between Pechorin as a self-orientalist character and the concept of superfluity. Pechorin, is literally a coloniser in his capacity as an officer in the Russian army fighting in the Caucasus. During this effort of external colonisation, we never see Pechorin in battle, and instead his focus is on his own inner struggles and his incapacity for conformity among the Russian high society.[557] The chapter is concerned, however, not so much with the traditional understanding of the superfluous man, who is seen as a result of the Westernised cultural developments that had taken place since Peter I. Instead, focus is on his methods of cultural appropriation and comparisons with Lermontov's concept of the *kavkazets* and Gould's definition of the *abrek*-character in Caucasian literature.[558]

In the end, I argue that Pechorin was similar to the Bhabhan hybrid, which I referred to as the 'inverted hybrid,' as Pechorin possesses traits of both 'civility' and 'barbarity,' not unlike his own perception of the Caucasus region.[559] That is, Pechorin takes advantage of his position as a coloniser, and his perceived ability to change his appearance to resemble the local population to his own personal gain. This reading of Pechorin is rooted in in discourses of self-othering and self-Orientalism and shows, how Lermontov took advantage of already existing stereotypes regarding the Caucasian populations to paint Pechorin as an evil character marked by depravity, 'uncivility' and 'barbarity.'

As Chapter III shows, there were also hints at superfluity in Leskov's *The Enchanted Wanderer*. Fliagin, the novella's protagonist and narrator, also deviates significantly from traditional superfluous men, in that he is born as a serf and as a result thereof is uneducated. His uneducated position also makes it possible for him to change his situation a number of times, which is normally not possible for superfluous men. In the novella, Leskov paints a picture of the Russian Empire which is similar to the one Radishchev painted in *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*, although Leskov

[557] Chances, *Conformity's Children*, pp. 40-46
[558] Gould, *Writers and Rebels…* pp. 6-7, 40
[559] Sobol, "The Uncanny Frontier…" pp. 65-79

uses a different point of view. While orientalising central areas of the Russian Empire, the author created an unusual superfluous character who is able to change his situation repeatedly. Fliagin's defining feature is his patriotism, which was well in line with how the peasantry was represented in the *lubok* folk art, but also played into what the *narodnichestvo* learned about the peasantry as they took to the countryside.[560] As such, Leskov instead emphasises the Orthodox church as the institution which hinders Fliagin's pursuit of happiness. His premonition, that he will continually suffer without dying until he joins a monastery, emerges as a different kind of bondage and in this way, Leskov emphasises the role of the Orthodox Church in the Empire's self-colonisation.

Paradoxically, Fliagin's uneducated status, does not prevent him from obtaining a status as a coloniser. While being held captive in the Kazakh desert, he expresses clear racist and Orientalist views, which is juxtaposed with the deep paradoxical nature of the Russian *narodnichestvo*-movement: while turning the blind eye to the suffering endured by colonised peoples in Russia's periphery, they opposed the abhorrent treatment of the peasantry in Central Russia. This is a central point in self-colonisation narratives of Russian literature but was most clearly expressed in Leskov's work.

In Chapter IV another major literary concept comes under scrutiny: that of the 'Petersburg text.' It is argued that this concept, just like the concept of superfluity needs a greater consideration to the theme of empire. This is especially evident given Belyi's representation of St. Petersburg as the embodiment of the Empire itself. Like the authors examined before, Belyi orientalises people and places normally reserved for notions of selfhood, i.e. Russians, but also the imperial capital turns into a space of peripheral characteristics. In Belyi's vision of the city of revolutionary strife and imperial decay the workers who are equipped with Asiatic attire, threaten the Apollonian order. The use of symbols from East Asia underscores the peripheral characteristics in Belyi's representation of the Russian capital. This builds on the myth of creation of the city, which was based on the idea of *tabula rasa*, an empty space on which the city was built out of nothing. The very act of building the city was an act of colonisation, but where colonies normally retain their status as peripheral, St. Petersburg was a peripheral land, which through the use of discourse (and the sacrifices of hundreds of thousands of serfs) was made into the very centre of the Empire. As such, Belyi brings the periphery (back) to the 'Petersburg text.'

A major theme in Belyi's work is that of the Dionysian and the Apollonian, representing chaos and order, respectively. These concepts were connected with the notions of the Orient and the

---

[560] Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*… p. 310-313

Occident, East and West. By letting the Dionysian infiltrate the Apollonian in the form of the characters Dudkin and Nikolai Apollonovich, Belyi represents Russian identity as a hybrid blend between East and West. However, with the constant use of racist language to denote workers through stereotypes connected with East Asia, this work represents the gravest example of self-colonisation narratives, as it paints 'Asianness' on the faces of St. Petersburg's workers. These self-othering narratives directed at the working class, is an indication of the notion of the superfluous masses examined in Chapter VI, under the term 'collective superfluity.'

While Belyi brought the periphery to St. Petersburg, Bulgakov's work, which was written in a post-revolutionary context, brings the colonial space directly into the home. Professor Preobrazhenskii refuses to adjust to the new ideological reality after the revolution: suddenly, the former nobility and their norms no longer had any value in society, which now emphasised the collective spirit of the working proletariat.[561] Again, however, we see the juxtaposition of a superfluous character with that of efforts to 'civilise' as the professor and his nemesis, Shvonder, both attempt to influence the dog-turned-human, Sharikov, according to their own cultural ideals. In allegorical terms *A Dog's Heart* examines the Soviet policy of the New Soviet Human, meant to represent proletarian values and collective spirit. Bulgakov uses the practise of eugenics, which was popular in the early years of the Soviet Union,[562] as an allegory to the Bolsheviks' efforts to change the identity of the Soviet citizens.

The result is a comedic novella that deals with the professor's and Shvonder's failed attempts to civilise the dog-turned-human. It exposes the flaws of both the old and the new forms of self-colonisation, while the home emerges as a site of colonial exploitation. The superfluous man, represented here by the professor, once again turns into a coloniser as he tries to 'civilise' Sharikov. The major difference in this instance, is that the civilisation process does not take place in a peripheral region, or in the Russian countryside, but rather in the very centre of the Empire. The centre is represented by the professor's apartment in central Moscow and underscores the reach of Soviet policies of self-colonisation.

In Chapter VI, the dekulakisation of the peasantry is described as the prime example of Soviet self-colonisation. The discourse with which the peasantry was represented as greedy, through the signification, *kulak*, was used to justify the subjugation of the peasantry as a whole. The arbitrariness with which the term was applied, further contributed to this discourse's resemblance with colonial

[561] Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination*… pp. 84-89
[562] Adams, "Eugenics in Russia…" pp. 161-182

discourse. In Platonov's novel this is represented in the narrative discourse through changing significations of the peasants in the collective farm and the arbitrariness with which the proletarians carry out the process of dekulakisation, which fits well with how scholars have characterised it.[563]

In the midst of this process, Voshchev, a superfluous character, works digging the pit for the foundation for a new proletarian residential complex. He feels an enormous sense of meaninglessness with the job he is performing, reiterating traits of traditional superfluous characters. However, we see in Platonov's work a second superfluous character, Elisei: a defected middle-peasant under suspicion for being a *kulak* who has joined the proletariat at the foundation pit. His status as in-between peasant and proletarian make the others wary of his presence, as they are not convinced that he is not a *kulak*. This indicates a similarity to the suspicion felt by colonial authorities toward hybrid colonial subjects.[564] Coupled with the representation of the *kulaki* as greedy, this instance shows that, while the focus had shifted in literary production from issues of race and ethnicity to issues of class, narratives of self-othering were still prevalent in representations of empire in the Soviet era.

Chapter VI presents the notion of collective superfluity represented in the masses of the dekulakised peasants. The collective speaking in unison, which was a satirical comment on the devotion of the communists to Stalin's policies of dekulakisation,[565] underscores the degree to which peasants had to assimilate to the Soviet ideology and avoid the stamp of superfluity and exile in Siberia. The notion of 'collective superfluity' was born out of Platonov's satirical representation of the collective, which showed how they had lost their sense of selfhood completely. However, if an individual peasant was not part of the collective, they would be deemed superfluous and sent to Siberia. That is, the collective creates the superfluity of the individuals that make up the collective, rendering the collective an expression of 'collective superfluity'.

Chapter VII examines how the Soviet Empire exploited their enormous territory to discard unwanted, or superfluous, citizens from the centre to the periphery where they could be useful in the development of peripheral lands through labour in mining, agriculture and other industries. The Gulag itself had a twofold function: it punished citizens and colonised lands. In doing so, it created a world that was completely detached from the rest of society, and the Gulag was examined as a separate world through Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales*. The detachedness of this world contributed to the sense of superfluity, as did the extremely cold weather in the Kolyma region, which the authorities was using as a weapon of torture. This simultaneously underscored the disregard for life that the Soviet

[563] Suslov, "'*Luchshe peregnut…*'" pp. 371-391; Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!...* p. 46
[564] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*
[565] Seifrid, *Andrey Platonov…* p. 142

authorities expressed. If a prisoner survived, they would be a utilised for labour, if not, another one would take their place. The masses of people sent to the Gulag represents the connection between self-colonisation and superfluity. If one was deemed in need of re-education or simply punishment for a crime, one was deemed superfluous to ordinary society and sent to a labour camp. This represents a major change to the notion of superfluity, which in the imperial era was used to connote a singular noble character, but I have used to characterise the self-colonising nature of the Russian and Soviet Empires in an effort to decolonise the concept.

Superfluity in this dissertation, thus, began as the feelings, senses and emotions of a few individuals, represented in Radishchev's traveller-narrator and Lermontov's Pechorin, and ended with the enormous masses of enserfed and dekulakised peasants and the millions of people sent into the horrors of the Gulag. These events in Russian history were characterised through the theory of self-colonisation which focuses on the othering of the self in the self/other-dichotomy of postcolonial theory. It was this approach which made the emergence of the concept of 'collective superfluity' possible. This represents a major inquest into the concept of superfluity, which is a significant development from the studies conducted by scholars such as Chances and Patterson.[566] While the core of their argument is still present in my characterisation of superfluous people, through my incorporation of the superfluous man's colonising characteristics and my efforts to decolonise the term, I identify superfluity as a condition which the Russian peasantry and the masses of people deemed unfit for Soviet society is struck with at the hands of Russia's imperial structures.

This dissertation, thus, represents a major step in a new direction of Russian literary studies and studies of the colonial nature of the Russian Empire. While drawing on Etkind in the development of my methodological and theoretical approach, my work distances itself conclusively from Etkind's approach and dismisses the notion that the Russian Empire's modes of colonisation were similar. Instead, I argue that the modes, while they occur simultaneously and at times in the same spaces, should be examined by acknowledging their differences, rather than pointing out their similarities. In this way, one can avoid creating contests of victimhood and distorting Russia's subjugation of non-Russian peoples in colonial spaces, external and internal.

This dissertation has used a range of established postcolonial theory by authors such as Fanon, Said, and Bhabha. While Fanon and Said remain very useful in identifying the incongruous power relations between the coloniser and the colonised, Bhabha's concept of the cultural hybrid was identified as particularly useful in my invention of the concept of the 'inverted hybrid' in Chapter II.

[566] *Chances, Conformity's Children…* Patterson, "The Loss of the Word…"

However, Bhabha's concept of hybridity, which underscores the colonial subject's characteristics influenced by both their originary culture and the culture imposed on them by the colonising empire, highlights a central point in this dissertation. While the Russian Empire colonised indigenous peoples externally and internally, it also colonised its Russian population – this characteristic makes the 'inverted hybrid' possible.

By focusing as heavily as I have on the suffering of peasants, there is the danger of diminishing the significance of the perils of the externally and internally colonised peoples. I have attempted to combat that by introducing the three modes of colonisation and making clear when I am referring to one or the other. It was a complicated empire which emerged as a hybrid between East and West. But this element of the Russian Empire, should not be taken as an excuse for the atrocities it committed in its borderlands. And it should certainly not be used as an attestation to its victimhood when faced with the West. Naturally, my approach is not perfect, but I hope that in the future it can become a standard way of studying Russian imperialism.

The future for studies into self-colonisation is unsure. Given the war in Ukraine, focus in Russian literary studies has shifted to Russophone literature, and rightly so. The war has created a conundrum of how to study literary works that are expressions of the same imperialist values which the current Russian ruler shows. While it is my hope that the study of Russophone literature continues to develop, as a scholar of Russian literature, I feel an immense internal conflict in continuing to study the literary works that have formed me as an academic. I hope that with the increased focus on the crimes committed by the Russian and Soviet Empires in my analyses of Russian literature, parallels can be drawn to the crimes of its current president.

Bibliography

Abbott, Jacob, *Peter the Great* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1902). URL: The Project Gutenberg eBook of Peter the Great, by Jacob Abbott

Achebe, Chinua, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness'" *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 57, no. 1 (Spring 2016), pp. 14-27

Adams, Mark B., "Eugenics in Russia, 1900-1940," in Adams (ed.), *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) pp. 161-182

Akelev, Evgenii, "The Barber of all Russia: Lawmaking, Resistance, and Mutual Adaptation During Peter the Great's Cultural Reforms," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 17, no. 2 (Spring 2016), pp. 241-275

Althusser, Louis, "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (Notes towards an investigation)," translated by Ben Brewster, in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 142-176

Andrianova, Anastassiya, "Narrating Animal Trauma in Bulgakov and Tolstoy," *Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 4 (Nov. 2016), pp. 1-13

Applebaum, Anne, *Gulag: A History of the Soviet Camps* (London: Penguin Books, 2003)

Armstrong, Judith M., "The True Origins of the Superfluous Man," *Russian Literature*, vol. 17 (1985), pp. 279-296

Bagger, Hans, "Skt. Petersborgs grundlæggelse og tidlige historie," *Nordisk Østforum*, vol. 1 (2003), pp. 9-27

Bahun, Sanja, "Andrei Bely and the Spaces of Historical Melancholia," in *Modernism and Melancholia: Writing as Countermourning* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 70-110

Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, edited and translated by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984)

Barnes, Steven A., *Death and Redemption: the Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011)

Barta, Peter I., *Bely, Joyce and, Döblin: Peripatetics in the City Novel* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996)

Baudin, Rodolphe, "The Public Self and the Intimate Body in Radishchev's Letters from Exile, *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 50, nos. 3-4 (2008), pp. 297-324

Beer, Daniel, "Civil Death, Radical Protest, and the Theatre of Punishment in the Reign of Alexander II," *Past and Present*, vol. 250 (Feb. 2021), pp. 171-202

Belikova, Ekatarina Vasil'evna, "Pechorin i mirazhi Zapada" *Imagologiia i komparativistika*, vol 18 (2022), pp. 59-71

Belinskii, Vissarion "*Geroi nashego vremeni sochinenie M. Lermontova*" in *Sobranie Sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow: *Khudozhestvennaia literatura*, 1948), pp. 551-629

Belknap, Robert, "St. Petersburg," in Deborah A. Martinsen and Olga Maiorova (eds.), *Dostoevsky in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 168-175

Bely, Andrei, *Peterburg* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1981)

Bely, Andrey, *Petersburg*, translated by John Elsworth (London: Pushkin Press, 2009)

Benjamin, Walter, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," translated by Harry Zohn, *Chicago Review*, vol 16, no. 1 (Winter - Spring 1963), pp. 80-101

Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2004)

Bishop, Claire, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (New York and London: Verso, 2012)

Blauner, Robert, "Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt," *Social Problems*, vol. 16, no. 4 (spring 1969), pp. 393-408

Bogachenko Tetiana, & Olga Oleinikova "The Ghosts of 'Internal Colonisation': Anthropogenic Impacts of Russian Imperial Ambitions in Ukraine," *Ethnicities*, vol. 0, no. 0 (Dec. 2023), pp. 1-20

Bogdanov, A., "*Chto takoe proletarskaia poeziia?*" *Proletarskaya kultura*, no. 1 (July 1918), pp. 12-22

Boym, Svetlana, "'Banality of Evil,' Mimicry, and the Soviet Subject: Varlam Shalamov and Hannah Arendt," *Slavic Review*, vol. 67, no. 2 (Summer 2008), pp. 342-363

Breger, Michael, "In a Sentimental Mode: The Literary and Philosophical Strains of Dissent in Alexander Radishchev's Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow," *Western Tributaries*, vol. 7 (2021), pp. 1-20

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Varlam Shalamov," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 27 Jun. 2024. URL: Varlam Shalamov | Gulag survivor, Soviet Union, Kolyma | Britannica. Accessed 21.09.2024

Brooks, Jeffrey, "The Russian Nation Imagined: The Peoples of Russia as Seen in Popular Imagery, 1860s-1890s," *Journal of Social History*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2010), pp. 533-558

Brunson, Molly, *Russian Realisms: Literature and Painting, 1840-1890* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016)

Buckler, Julie A., *Mapping St. Petersburg: Imperial Text and Cityshape* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005)

Bulgakov, Mikhail, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, vol. 2 (Moscow: *Khudozhestvennaia literatura*, 1989)

Bulgakov, Mikhail, *A Dog's Heart*, translated by Antonina W. Bouis, (Richmond: Alma Classics, 2016)

Bulich, Sergei Konstantinovich, "Ѳ" in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgausa i Efrona*. URL: ЭСБЕ/Фита — Викитека (wikisource.org) Accessed 16.09.2024

Burbank, Jane & Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010)

Burgin, Diana L., "Bulgakov's Early Tragedy of the Scientist-Creator: An Interpretation of *The Heart of a Dog,*" *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 22, no. 4 (Winter, 1978), pp. 494-508

Chances, Ellen B., *Conformity's Children: An Approach to the Superfluous Man in Russian Literature* (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, 1978)

Chances, Ellen B., "The Superfluous Man in Russian Literature" in Neil Cornwell (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 111-122

Chatterjee, Partha, "The Nation and its Peasants" in Vinayak Chaturvedi (ed.), *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London & New York: Verso, 2000), pp. 8-23

Chávez, John R., "Aliens in Their Native Lands: The Persistence of Internal Colonial Theory," *Journal of World History*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2011), pp. 785–809

Chernyshevsky, Nicholas, "The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality," revised translation by James P. Scanlan, in James M. Edie, James P. Scanlan, Mary-Barbara Zeldin (eds.), *Russian Philosophy Volume II: The Nihilist, the Populists, Critics of Religion and Culture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), pp. 16-28

Cho, Jinhyun, "Constructing a White Mask through English: the Misrecognized Self in Orientalism," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, no. 271 (2021), pp. 17-34

Clark, Katerina, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, third edition, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000)

Compagnon, Antoine, *Literature, Theory, and Common Sense*, translated by Carol Cosman (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004)

Dame, Natalia, "Why is Sharikov dead? The fate of 'the Soviet Frankenstein' in Bulgakov's *A Dog's Heart*," *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, vol. 61, no. 1 (2019), pp. 25-56

Davoliute, Violeta, "Shalamov's Memory" *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, vol. 47, no. ½ (March-June 2005), pp. 1-21

Dennison, Tracy, *The Institutional Framework of Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Derrida, Jacques, "'A Self-Unsealing Poetic Text': Poetics and Politics of Witnessing" in Michael P. Clark (ed.), *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 180-207

Dirlik, Arif, "Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism," *History and Theory*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Dec. 1996), pp. 96-118

Di Salvo, Maria, "A Venice of the North? Italian Views of St Petersburg," in Anthony Cross (ed.), *St Petersburg, 1703-1825* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), pp. 71-79

Dmitriev, A. V. & I. E. Zadorozhniuk, "Sotsiogenez provokatsii i psikhoportret provokatora. (Istoriosofskie providchestva Andreia Belogo v romane "Peterburg"), *Voprosy filosofii*, no 5 (2017), p. 124-137

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, *The House of the Dead*, translated by Roger Cockrell, (Richmond: Alma Classics, 2018)

Duzhina, Natalia, "Vymysel, osnovannii na realnosti: Primety stalinskogo byta v povesti A. Platonova '*Kotlovan*'" *Voprosy literatury*, no. 2 (2008), pp. 79-114

Duzhina, N. I., "Stroitel'stvo sotsializma v povesti A. Platonova '*Kotlovan,*'" *Studia Litteratum*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2019), pp. 252-267

Emerson, Caryl, "Symbolist and Modernist World-Building: Three Cities, Three Novels and the Devil," in *The Cambridge Introduction to Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 179-183

Erokhina, Olga V. & Olga A. Litzenberger, "German Colonists in the Migration Policy of the Russian Autocracy (Analysis of the Laws of the Russian Empire)," *RUDN Journal of Russian History*, vol. 19, no. 4 (Nov. 2020), pp. 810–823

Etkind, Alexander, "Fuko i tezis vnutrennei kolonizatsii: Postkolonialnii vzgliad na sovetskoe proshloe," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 49 (2001), pp. 50-73

Etkind, Alexander, “Orientalism Reversed: Russian Literature in the Times of Empires,” *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2007), pp. 617-628

Etkind, Alexander, *Internal Colonization: Russia’s Imperial Experience* (Malden: Polity Press, 2011)

Etkind, Alexander, “How Russia Colonized Itself: Internal Colonization in Classical Russian Historiography,” *International Journal for History, Culture, and Modernity*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2015), pp. 159-172

Fanon, Frantz, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington, (London: Penguin Books, 2001)

Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008)

Fedorova, Milla, “Food and Humanism. Bulgakov’s Dialogue with Tolstoj on Dogs’ Food, Vegetarianism and Human Nature in ‘Sobač’e serdtse,’” *Russian Literature*, vol. 65, no. 4 (May 2009), pp. 431-450

Feighery, William G., “Tourism and Self-Orientalism in Oman: a Critical Discourse Analysis,” vol. 9, no. 3 (2012), pp. 269-284

Figes, Orlando *Natasha’s Dance* (London: Penguin Books, 2003)

Fitzpatrick, Sheila, *Tear off the Masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)

Foucault, Michel, “The Political Function of the Intellectual,” *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 17 (Summer 1977), pp. 12-14

Fournier, Anna, “Reflective Colonization: Domination, Consent, and the Self in Imperial Russia (review article),” *Russian History*, vol. 39 (2012), pp. 519-537

Fratto, Elena, “Endocrine Glands and the Anthropocene: Metabolic Storytelling in Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Heart of a Dog*,” *Russian Literature*, vols. 114-115 (2020), pp. 45-65

Freeborn, Richard, “The Nineteenth Century: The Age of Realism, 1855-80” in Derek Moser (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 248-332

Fudge, Erica, “At the Heart of the Home: An Animal Reading of Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Heart of a Dog*,” *HUMaNIMALIA*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Sep. 2009), pp. 10-23

Fusso, Susanne, “Failures of Transformation in *Sobač’e serdce*,” *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 33, no. 3 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 386-399

Genette, Gérard, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, translated by Jane E. Lewin, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980)

Gentes, Andrew "*Katorga*: Penal Labour and Tsarist Russia," *ASEES*, vol. 18, nos. 1-2 (2004), pp. 41-61

George, Arthur L., *St. Petersburg: Russia's Window to the Future* (Lanham, New York, and Oxford: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2003)

Gheith, Jehanne M., "The Superfluous Man and the Necessary Woman: A 'Re-Vision,'" *The Russian Review*, vol. 55, no. 2 (Apr. 1996), pp. 226-244

Gill, Graeme, *Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Gippius, Zinaida, "*Peterburg*," in Gippius, *Stikhotvoreniia zhivye litsa* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1991) pp. 93-94

Glasheva, Z. Zh., "Dokumenty istorii semimesyachnoi voiny v Kabarde 1778-79 gg.," *Izvestiya Kabardino-Balkarskogo nauchnogo tsentra*, vol. 99, no. 1 (2021), pp. 70-81

Gould, Rebecca, *Writers and Rebels: The Literature of Insurgency in the Caucasus* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2016)

Gould, Rebecca Ruth, "The Aesthetic Terrain of Settler Colonialism: Katherine Mansfield and Anton Chekhov's Natives," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2019), pp. 48-65

Gritsai, Olga & Herman van der Wusten, "Moscow and St. Petersburg, a Sequence of Capitals, a Tale of Two Cities," *GeoJournal*, vol. 51 (2000), pp. 33-45

Gromova, P. S., "Napoleon v tvorcheskom soznanii M. Yu. Lermontova," *Russian Linguistic Bulletin*, vol. 56, no 8 (2024), pp. 1-4

Groys, Boris "Imena goroda," in *Utopiia i obmen* (Moscow: Znak, 1993), pp. 357-365

Gusejnova, Dina, "Alexander Etkind. Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience (Review)," *Laboratorium*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2012), pp. 127–130

Gutiérrez, Ramón A., "Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race," *Du Bois Review*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2004), pp. 281–295

Giunter, Kh., "*Allegoricheskie struktury v* '*Kotlovane*' *A. Platonova*," *Russian Literature*, vol. 56, nos. 1-3 (2004), pp. 107-119

Hamilton, Craig, "Allegory, Blending, and Censorship in Modern Literature," *JLS*, vol. 40 (2011), pp. 23-42

Hansen, Jeppe Heino, “Creating the Peasant as Other: Self-colonisation in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 51, no. 5 (2023), p. 931-953

Hechter, Michael, Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999)

Hellebust, Rolf, “The Real St. Petersburg,” *The Russian Review*, vol. 62, no. 4 (Oct. 2003), pp. 495-507

Hokanson, Katya, *Writing at Russia’s Border* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2008)

Hosking, Geoffrey, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (London: Fontana Press, 1998)

Hosking, Geoffrey, *Russia and the Russians: A History*, second edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011)

Howell, Yvonne, “Eugenics, Rejuvenation, and Bulgakov’s Journey into the Heart of Dogness,” *Slavic Review*, vol. 65, no. 3 (Autumn, 2006), pp. 544-562

Hughes, Lindsey, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998)

Hustis, Harriet & Maria Mostyka, “The Art of Indifference in Shalamov’s Kolyma Tales,” *The Russian Review*, vol. 76 (Oct. 2017), pp. 732-747

Ioffe, Solomon, “*Tainopis v Sobachem Serdtse Bulgakova*,” *Novii zhurnal*, nos. 168-169 (1987), pp. 260-274

Jahn, Hubertus F., “Myths, Urban Folklore and Local Identity in St. Petersburg,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol. 46 (2012), pp. 388-403

Jersild, Austin, “Internal Colonization: Russia’s Imperial Experience by Alexander Etkind (Review),” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 118, no. 5 (Dec. 2013), pp. 1636–1637

Juel, Just, *En rejse til Rusland under tsar Peter, dagbogsoptegnelser* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske boghandels forlag, 1893)

Kahn, Andrew, “Alexander Radishchev’s *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*: The Defence of Natural Rights and the Right to Self-defence” in Xavier Márquez (ed.), *Democratic Moments: Reading Democratic Texts* (London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 89-96

Keating, Jennifer, “Place, Power, and Experience in Tsarist Exile,” *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 19, no. 4 (Fall 2018), p. 849-860

Keating, Jennifer, “Amid the Horrors of Nature: ‘Dead’ Environments at the Margins of the Russian Empire” in C. J. Campbell, A. Giovine and J. Keating (eds.), *Empty Spaces: Perspectives on Emptiness in Modern History* (London: Unversity of London Press, 2019), pp. 33-58

Keenan, Paul, *Creating a ‘Public’ in St. Petersburg, 1703-1761* (Dissertation: University College London, 2013)

Khalid, Adeeb, “Internal Colonization: Russia’s Imperial Experience by Alexander Etkind (Review),” *Slavic Review*, vol. 71, no. 4 (Winter 2012), pp. 905–907

Khodarkovsky, Michael, “‘Ignoble Savages and Unfaithful Subjects’: Constructing Non-Christian Identities in Early Modern Russia,” in Daniel R. Brower, and Edward J. Lazzerini (eds.), *Russia’s Orient – Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1997), pp. 9–26.

Khodarkovsky, Michael, “Between Europe and Asia: Russian State Colonialism in Comparative Perspective, 1550s-1900s,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, vol. 52 (2018), pp. 1-29

Khomyakov, Maxim “Russia: Colonial, Anticolonial: Postcolonial Empire?” *Social Science Information*, vol. 59, no. 2 (2020), pp. 225-263

Kireevski, Ivan Vasil’evich, “On the Nature of European Culture and its Relation to the Culture of Russia – Letter to Count E. E. Komarovskii,” translated by Valentine Snow, in Marc Raeff (ed.), *Russian Intellectual History* (New York, Chicago, & Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1966), p. 174-207

Kirianova, E. A., “Lyudi. Sobytiya. Fakty. Rasskulachivanie krestyanstva centra Rossii v nachale 1930-kh godov” *Voprosy istorii*, vol. 5 (2006), pp. 146-152

Klotz, Christian, “Fichte’s Explanation of the Dynamic Structure of Consciousness in the 1794–95 *Wissenschaftslehre*” in David James & Günther Zöller (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Fichte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 65-92

Kokobobo, Ani, “The Travelogue and the Ode— Aleksandr Radishchev’s Polemic with the Court Ode in *Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu*,” *The Russian Review*, vol. 72 (Oct. 2013), pp. 607-621

Komel, Mirt, “Re-orientalizing the Assassins in Western Historical-Fiction Literature: Orientalism and Self-Orientalism in Bartol’s Alamut, Tarr’s Alamut, Boschert’s Assassins of Alamut and Oden’s Lion of Cairo,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 17, no. 5 (2014), pp. 525-548

Koplatadze, Tamar, "Theorising Russian Postcolonial Studies," *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2019), pp. 469-489

Koznarsky, Taras, "*Petersburg* and Urbanism in the Modernist Novel" in Leonid Livak (ed.), *A Reader's Guide to Andrei Bely's Petersburg* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), pp. 206-211

Krementsov, Nikolai, "From 'Beastly Philosophy' to Medical Genetics: Eugenics in Russia and the Soviet Union," *Annals of Science*, vol. 68, no. 1 (2011), pp. 61-92

Kujundzic, Dragan, "'After': Russian Postcolonial Identity," *MLN*, vol. 115, no. 5 (Dec. 2000), pp. 892-908

Lane, Tora, "A Groundless Foundation Pit," *Ulbandus Review*, vol. 14 (2011/2012), pp. 61-75

Laursen, Eric, "Bad Words Are Not Allowed!: Language and Transformation in Mikhail Bulgakov's 'Heart of a Dog,'" *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 51, no. 3 (Autumn, 2007), pp. 491-513

Layton, Susan, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

LeBlanc, Ronald D., "Feeding a Poor Dog a Bone: The Quest for Nourishment in Bulgakov's *Sobach'e Serdtse*," *The Russian Review*, vol. 52, no. 1 (Jan. 1993), pp. 58-78

Leonard, Carol Scott, *Agrarian Reform in Russia: The Road from Serfdom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Lermontov, Mikhail, *Geroi nashego vremeni* (Moscow: *Khuduzhestvenneia literatura*, 1975)

Lermontov, M. Iu., *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Khudozhestvannaia literatura, 1984)

Lermontov, Mikhail, *A Hero of Our Time* in *A Hero of Our Time and Princess Ligovskaya*, translated by Martin Parker, revised by Neil Cornwell (Richmond: Alma Classics, 2016)

Leskov, N. S., *Izbranie sochineniia*, vol. 1 (Berlin, St. Petersburg and Moscow: Izdatelstvo Z. I. Grzhebina, 1923)

Leskov, Nikolai, *Sochineniia v trekh tomakh,* vol. 1, (Moscow: *Khudozhestvennaia literatura*, 1988)

Leskov, Nikolai, *The Enchanted Wanderer & Other Stories*, translated by Richard Pevear & Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Vintage, 2014)

Liu, Helena, “Beneath the White Gaze: Strategic Self-Orientalism Among Chinese Australians,” *Human Relations*, vol. 70, no. 7 (2017), pp. 781-804

Lobchenko, Lyudmila N., “Raskulachivanie i spetspereselenie byvshikh kulakov na Evropeiskii Sever Rossii: istoriograficheskii aspekt,” *Voprosy istorii*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2021), pp. 134-143

Lotman, Iurii M., “The Decembrist in Daily Life (Everyday Behaviour as a Historical-Psychological Category)” in Alexander D. Nakhimovsky & Alice Stone Nakhimovsky (eds.), *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 95-149

Lotman, Yuri, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, translated by Ann Shukman (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2001)

Lounsbery, Anne, “Internal Colonization: Russia’s Imperial Experience by Alexander Etkind (Review),” *The Russian Review*, vol. 72, no. 1 (Jan. 2013), pp. 157–160

Lounsbery, Anne, *Life is Elsewhere: Symbolic Geography in the Russian Provinces, 1800-1917* (Ithaca and London: Northern Illinois University Press, 2019)

Luppov, Sergey P., *Istoriia stroitelstva Peterburga* (Moscow: *Nauka*, 1957)

Lundblad-Janjic, Josefina, “Rethinking the Writer’s Duty: Varlam Shalamov’s Kolyma Tales and the Russian Intelligentsia in the Gulag,” *Partial Answers*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2021), pp. 77-100

de Madariaga, Isabel, “Catherine the Great” in H.M. Scott (ed.) *Enlightened Absolutism – Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth Century Europe* (London: Palgrave, 1990), pp. 289-311

Mann, Robert, “Apollo and Dionysus in Andrei Belyi’s Petersburg,” *The Russian Review*, vol. 57, no. 4 (Oct. 1998), pp. 507-525

Matich, Olga, *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia’s Fin de Siecle* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005)

Matich, Olga, *Petersburg/Petersburg: Novel and City* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011)

Maiorova, O. E., “*Opyt reinterpretatsii ‘Ocharovannogo strannika’ N. S. Leskova*” in *Russko-frantsuzskii razgovornik, ili / ou Les Causeries du 7 Septembre* (Moscow: *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 2015), pp. 352-363

McConnell, Allen, *A Russian Philosophe – Alexander Radishchev 1749-1802*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1964)

McDowell, Andrea, "'*I ona byla chelovekom'* (For the Dog was Once a Human Being): The Moral Obligation in Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog*," *Otherness: Essays and Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Sep. 2016), pp. 201-230

Mekhtiev, V. G., "'Geroi nashego vremeni' kak 'arkhetip' siuzheta i obrazov v 'Ocharovannom stranike,'" *Nauchnii*, no. 5 (2021), pp. 225-236

Mikhailik, Elena, "Dostoyevsky and Shalamov: Orpheus and Pluto," *The Dostoyevsky Review*, vol. 1 (2000), pp. 147-157

Miller, Vsevolod "Ilya Muromets" in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgausa i Efrona*. URL: ЭСБЕ/Илья Муромец — Викитека (wikisource.org) Accessed: 16.09.2024

Milne, Lesley, *Mikhail Bulgakov: A Critical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

Mirsky, D. S., *A History of Russian Literature* (Edited and abridged by Francis J. Whitfield, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949)

Mondry, Henrietta, *Political Animals: Representing Dogs in Modern Russian Culture* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015), pp. 309-362

Moon, David, *The Russian Peasantry 1600-1930: The World the Peasants Made* (London and New York: Longman, 1999)

Moon, David, *The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia, 1762-1907* (London and Edinburgh: Pearson Education, 2001)

Moore, David Chioni "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique," *PMLA*, Vol. 116, No. 1 (2001), pp. 111-128

Morozov, Viatcheslav, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

Morrison, Alexander, "Internal Colonization. Russia's Imperial Experience by Alexander Etkind (Review)," *Ab Imperio*, vol. 3 (2013), pp. 445-457

Morrison, Alexander "The Russian Empire and Soviet Union: Too Soon to Talk of Echoes?" in Kalypso Nicolaïdis, Berny Sèbe & Gabrielle Maas (eds.), *Echoes of Empire: Memory, Identity and Colonial Legacies* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015), pp. 155-174

Morrison, Alexander, *The Russian Conquest of Central Asia: A Study in Imperial Expansion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020)

Nafziger, Steven, "Communal Property Rights and Land Redistributions in Late Tsarist Russia," *Economic History Review*, vol. 69, no. 3 (2016), pp. 773-800

Nayki, Nil Korkut, “Anticipating the Existentialist Hero in Mikhail Lermontov’s *A Hero of Our Time* and Joseph Conrad’s *Nostromo*,” *Journal of Social Sciences*, vol. 16, No. 1 (2017), pp. 183-192

Nefedova, T. G. & A. I. Treivish, “Russia Between Two Capitals: Specifics of Territorial Changes,” *Regional Research of Russia*, vol. 4, no. 4 (2014), pp. 31-43

Nelles, William, “Beyond the Bird's Eye: Animal Focalization,” *Narrative*, vol. 9, no. 2 (May 2001), pp. 188-194

Offord, Derek, “Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought and Literature” in Neil Cornwell (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 123-135.

Oskanian, Kevork, “A Very Ambiguous Empire: Russia’s Hybrid Exceptionalism,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 70, no. 1 (Jan. 2018), pp. 26-52

van der Oye, David Schimmelpenninck, “Russia’s Asian Temptation,” *International Journal*, vol. 55, no. 4 (Autumn, 2000), pp. 603-623

Pallot, Judith, “Forced Labour for Forestry: The Twentieth Century History of Colonisation and Settlement in the North of Perm’ Oblast” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 54, no. 7 (Nov. 2002), pp. 1055-1083

Paperno, Irina, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988)

Patterson, David, “The Loss of the Word in Superfluous Man,” in Patterson, *Exile: The Sense of Alienation in Modern Russian Letters* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), pp. 2-36

Peace, R. A., “*The Enchanted Wanderer*: A Parable of Russian Identity,” *Russian Literature*, vol. 29 (1991), pp. 439-454

Piacentini, Laura & Judith Pallot, “‘In Exile Imprisonment’ in Russia,” *The British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 54, no. 1 (Jan. 2014), pp. 20-37

Pinderhughes, Charles, “How ‘Black Awakening in Capitalist America’ Laid the Foundation for a New Internal Colonialism Theory,” *The Black Scholar*, vol. 40, no. 2 (2010), pp. 71–78

Pipes, Richard, *Russia Under the Old Regime* (London: Penguin, 1993)

Platonov, Andrey, *The Foundation Pit*, translated by Robert Chandler, Elizabeth Chandler & Olga Meerson, (London: Vintage Books, 2010)

Platonov, Andrei, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3 (Moscow: *Vremia*, 2011)

Plokhy, Serhii, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern identities in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Porshneva, Olga S., “Bolshevik Engineering of the “New Man” in the Early Soviet Period: Theoretical Bases, Political and Ideological Priorities, Evolution of Approaches,” *RUDN Journal of Russian History*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2019), pp. 67-84

Porus, Vladimir, “Chelovek lishniy,” *Gumanitarnye issledovaniya v Vostochnoi Sibiri i na Dalnem Vostoke*, vol. 29, no. 3 (2014), pp. 115-124

Porus, Vladimir, “A Superfluous Man,” translated by Peter Golub, *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 54, no. 2, (2016), pp. 113-128

Proffer, Ellendea, *Bulgakov: Life and Work* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1984)

Propp, Vladimir *Morphology of the Folktale*, translated by Laurence Scott, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968)

Pushkin, Alexander, “St. Petersburg: Introduction to *The Bronze Horseman,*” translated by Carleton Copeland, in Roger Clarke (ed.) *Lyrics Volume IV* (London: Alma Classics, 2022), pp. 210-213

Raeff, Marc, “At the Origins of a Russian National Consciousness: Eighteenth Century Roots and the Napoleonic Wars,” *The History Teacher*, vol. 25, no. 1 (Nov. 1991), pp. 7-18

Ram, Harsha, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003)

Radishchev, Alexander, *Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu* (St. Petersburg: *s.n.*, 1905)

Radishchev, Alexander, *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 2020, trans. by Andrew Kahn & Irina Reyfman)

Rothberg, Michael, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009)

Russell, Sandra Joy, “The City as Dialectic: Andrei Bely’s Creative Consciousness, its Nietzschean Influence, and the Urban Centre in Petersburg,” *TranscUlturAl*, vol. 1, No. 4 (2011) pp. 31-46

Ruud, Charles A., *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press 1804-1906* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2009)

Galina Rylkova, “No ‘Room of her Own’: Anna Akhmatova’s Tenure in Soviet Culture,” in Rylkova, *The Archeaology of Anxiety: The Russian Silver Age and Its Legacy* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), pp. 66-107

Sabol, Steven, *The Touch of Civilization: Comparing American and Russian Internal Colonization* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2017)

Said, Edward, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994)

Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978)

Scanlan, James P., "Nikolaj Chernyshevsky and the Philosophy of Realism in Nineteenth-Century Russian Aesthetics," *Studies in Soviet Thought*, vol. 30, no. 1 (Jul. 1985), pp. 1-14

Schönle, Andreas, Andrei Zorin & Alexei Evstratov (eds), *The Europeanized Elite in Russia, 1762-1825* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016)

Seeley, Frank Friedeberg, "The Heyday of the Superfluous Man in Russia," *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 31, no. 76 (Dec. 1952), pp. 92-112

Seifrid, Thomas, *Andrey Platonov: Uncertainties of Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

Seifrid, Thomas, *A Companion to Andrey Platonov's* The Foundation Pit (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009)

Shalamov, Varlam, *Kolymskie rasskazy* (London: Overseas Publications Interchange, 1978)

Shalamov, Varlam, *Kolyma Tales*, translated by John Glad, (London: Penguin Books, 1994)

Shalamov, Varlam, "O moei proze." URL: (о моей прозе) // Варлам Шаламов (shalamov.ru) Accessed 20.09.2024

Shcherbatova, Irina F., "Lermontov: The Failure of Humanism," *Russian Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 54, no. 2 (2016), pp. 145-159

Shelemova, A.O. & Faezech Karimian, "*Retseptsiya vostochnogo motiva v proizvedeniyakh A.N. Radishcheva i I.A. Krylova* (The Perception of Oriental Motifs in the Works by A.N. Radishchev and I.A. Krylov)" *Vestnik RUDN*, no. 4 (2012), pp. 85-90

Shevyrev, Alexander, "The Axis Petersburg-Moscow: Outward and Inward Russian Capitals," *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 30, no. 1 (Nov. 2003), pp. 70-84

Shevyrev, Stepan Petrovich, "*Geroi nashego vremeni*," *Moskvitianin,* vol 1, no. 2 (1841). URL: Lib.ru/Классика: Шевырев Степан Петрович. "Герой нашего времени" Accessed 16.09.2024.

Shkandrij, Myroslav, *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial Times* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2001)

Shklovsky, Viktor, "Art, as Device," translated by Alexandra Berlina, *Poetics Today*, vol. 36, no. 3 (Sep. 2015), pp. 151-174

Slezkine, Yuri, “Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Socialism,” *The Russian Review*, vol. 59 (2000), pp. 227-234

Smith, Douglas, “Alexander Radishchev’s *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* and the Limits to Freedom of Speech in the Reign of Catherine the Great” in Elizabeth Powers (ed.), *Freedom of Speech: The History of an Idea* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011), pp. 61-80

Smith, Jeremy, “Was there a Soviet National Policy?” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 71, no. 6 (2019), 972-993

Sobol, Valeria, “Internal Orientalism in Radishchev’s ‘Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow,’” *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie*, vol. 68, no. 2 (2011), pp. 241-269

Sobol, Valeria, “The Uncanny Frontier of Russian Identity: Travel, Ethnography and Empire in Lermontov’s ‘Taman’” *The Russian Review*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (2011), pp. 65-79

Solzhenitsyn, Alexander, *The Gulag Archipelago*, translated by Harry Willetts & Thomas P. Whitney, (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco & London: Harper & Row, 1974)

Stanchevici, Dmitri, “The Rhetorical Construction of Social Classes in the Reports of Stalin’s Secret Police,” *Technical Writing and Communication*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2013), pp. 261 288

Steinberg, Mark D., *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity, & the Sacred in Russia, 1910-1925* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002)

Steinberg, Mark D., *Petersburg Fin de Siècle* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011)

Sunderland, Willard, “Peasants on the Move: State Peasant Resettlement in Imperial Russia, 1805-1830s,” *The Russian Review*, vol. 52, no. 4 (Oct. 1993), pp. 472-485

Sunderland, Willard, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004)

Sunderland, Willard “Catherine’s Dilemma: Resettlement and Power in Russia, 1500s–1914” in Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen (eds.), *Globalising Migration History: The Eurasian Experience (16th-21st Centuries)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), pp. 55-70

Sunderland, Willard “The Greatest Emancipator: Abolition and Empire in Tsarist Russia,” *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 93 (2021), pp. 566-598

Suslov, Andrei, “‘*Luchshe peregnut, chem nedognut*’: Dekulakization as a Facet of Stalin’s Social Revolution (The Case of Perm Region),” *Russian History Review* 78 (July 2019), pp. 371-391

Sytova, Alla, Elena Itkina, Elena Mishina, Natalia Rudakova & Antonina Sakovich, *The Lubok: Russian Folk Pictures 17th to 19th Century* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1984)

Tagirova, Nailya, “Mapping the Empire’s Economic Regions from the Nineteenth to the Early Twentieth Century” in Jane Burbank, Mark von Hagen & Anatolyi Remnev (eds.), *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700-1917* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), pp. 125-138

Todd III, William Mills, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin* (Cambridge, MA, & London: Harvard University Press, 1986)

Toker, Leona, “Varlam Shalamov’s Kolyma” in Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine (eds.), *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), p. 151-171

Toker, Leona, “Toward a Poetics of Documentary Prose – From the Perspective of Gulag Testimonies,” *Poetics Today*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Summer 1997), pp. 187-222

Toker, Leona, *Return from the Archipelago: Narratives of Gulag Survivors* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000)

Tolz, Vera, *Russia* (London & New York: Arnold & Oxford University Press, 2001)

Tolz, Vera, *Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Toporov, V. N., *Peterburgskii tekst Russkoi literatury* (St. Petersburg: *Iskusstvo SPB*, 2003)

Unknown author, “Raznochintsy” in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’ Brokgausa i Efrona*. URL: ЭСБЕ/Разночинцы — Викитека (wikisource.org) Accessed 21.09.2024

Unknown author, “Tadzhiki,” in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’ Brokgausa i Efrona*. URL: ЭСБЕ/Таджики — Викитека (wikisource.org) Accessed 21.09.2024

Viola, Lynne, “Collectivization in the Soviet Union: Specificities and Modalities” in Constantin Iordachi & Arnd Bauerkämper (eds.), *The Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2014), p. 49-77

Volkov, Solomon, *St. Petersburg: A Cultural History* (London, Auckland, Melbourne, Singapore, & Toronto: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1996)

Voltaire, *The History of Peter the Great*, translated by Tobias Smollett (Manchester: Samuel Johnson & Son, 1845). URL: The Project Gutenberg eBook of The History of Peter the Great, by Tobias Smollett from Voltaire.

Weitz, Eric D., “Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges,” *Slavic Review*, vol. 61, no. 1 (spring 2002), pp. 1-29

White, James, *Red Hamlet: the Life and Ideas of Alexander Bogdanov* (Leiden and Boston: BRILL, 2018)

Williams, Stephen Wyn, “Internal Colonialism, Core-Periphery Contrasts and Devolution: An Integrative Comment,” *Area*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1977), pp. 272-278

Wirtschafter, Elise Kimmerling, *Russia’s Age of Serfdom – 1649-1861* (Malden, MA, Oxford, UK and Carlton, VIC: Blackwell Publishing, 2008)

Wood, Alan *Russia's Frozen Frontier: A History of Siberia and the Russian Far East 1581-1991* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011)

Wright, A.C., “Animals and Animal Imagery in M. A. Bulgakov,” *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, vol. 36, no. 2 (Jan. 1991), pp. 220-228

Yan, Grace & Carla Almeida Santos, “‘China Forever: Tourism Discourse and Self-Orientalism,” *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 36, no. 2 (2009), pp. 295-315

Yarmolinsky, Avrahm, *Road to Revolution: A Century of Russian Radicalism* (Guildford, Surrey: Princeton University Press, 1986)

Yilmaz, Victoria Bilge & Hatira Kamalova: “A Superfluous Man: Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Lermontov’s *A Hero of Our Time*, and Conrad’s *The Shadow-Line*,” *AGATHOS*, vol. 10, No. 1 (2019), pp. 123-136

Young, Robert J. C., *Empire, Colony, Postcolony* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015)

Zaslavsky, Victor, “Shalamov’s New Prose,” *Society*, vol. 59 (2022), p. 278-281

Zavarkina, M. V., “Kvaziutopiia v tvorchestve A. Platonova 1930 godov,” *Problemy istoricheskoi poetiki*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2015), pp. 570-588