Nineteenth-Century Russian Metafiction:

Narrative and Ideological Self-Consciousness in the Russian Novels of the 1860s

A Dissertation Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the persistence of metafictional narrative strategies in nineteenth-century Russian literature, focussing particularly on examples from the decade of the 1860s. Self-conscious narrative techniques featured prominently in Russian novels of the 1860s, a period when Russian culture in general became exceedingly politicised. This thesis argues that this rise of self-conscious elements in fiction, mainly in the novel, coincided with the rise of ideological self-consciousness in readers and writers. Moreover, it argues that self-consciousness was integral to the development of the Russian novel and can be traced from the earliest examples of the genre in the late eighteenth century to the realist prose of the 1860s and further.

It is argued in the first chapter that Nikolai Chernyshevskii's novel *Chto delat'?* (1863) used metafictional narrative strategies to communicate to the readers ideas on the relationship between art and reality developed by Chernyshevskii. In the second chapter, it is argued that in his novel *Vzbalamuchennoe more* (1863) Aleksei Pisemskii used metanarrative to achieve a balance between verisimilitude and didacticism in the literary text. It is argued in the third chapter that Avdot'ia Panaeva's novel *Zhenskaia dolia* (1862) was an example of feminist metafiction that used a self-consciously transgressive narrative voice to negotiate its status as a realist narrative that was authored by a woman writer. It is concluded that metafictional narrative strategies featured prominently in Russian novels of the 1860s, regardless of the ideological persuasion of the author. The conclusion ultimately frames self-consciousness as an inherent trait of the Russian novelistic tradition and raises broader questions regarding its role in Russian literary history.

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Preparation of the manuscript

The Library of Congress transliteration system is used throughout. Exceptions are made for titles of and quotations from primary and secondary works where the authors themselves use other systems. The names of Russian scholars are cited including abbreviated forms of first names and patronymics unless the authors themselves have omitted them. The names of Russian scholars who have published in English are transliterated in accordance with their preferred forms. Continuing periodicals, such as *N. G. Chernyshevskii: Stat'i, issledovaniia i materialy,* are cited variously as journals or edited volumes, according to how a particular volume was catalogued in Russian GOST bibliographies.

Quotations from Russian language sources are given in Russian, and orthography has been modernised where necessary. Short quotations from Russian sources, with a length of less than a sentence, are translated into English. All such translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated. Where the original Russian wording is essential for the clarity of the argument, the original Russian is supplied immediately afterwards in square brackets. References are given in footnotes and in accordance with the conventions of the MHRA Style Guide, 2nd edn (London: Modern Humanities Research Accosiation, 2008). Full references are given for the first citation of the work and abbreviated forms are used thereafter.

Abbreviations

GIKHL	Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury
MGU	Moskovskii gosudarstvenii universitet
AN SSSR	Akademiia nauk SSSR
RKhGI	Russkii khristianskii gumanitarnii institut
RKhGA	Russkaia khristianskaia gumanitarnaia akademiia
SPbGU	Sankt-Petersburgskii gosudarstvennii universitet
KGU	Kasakhskii gosudarstvennii universitet
OGIZ	Ob''edinenie gosudarstvennykh knizhno-zhurnal'nykh izdatel'stv

All these games, by the intensity of their effects, demonstrate the importance of the boundary they tax their ingenuity to overstep, in defiance of verisimilitude – a boundary that is precisely the narrating (or the performance) itself: a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells.

Gérard Genette[1]

[1] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 236.

Introduction

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Russian reading public encountered acutely self-conscious meta-literary observations in the most popular texts of the period. The following, for instance, was how Aleksandr Pushkin teased readers of his novel in verse, *Evgenii Onegin* (1833), in its fourth chapter:

И вот уже трещат морозы

И серебрятся средь полей…

(Читатель ждет уж рифмы розы;

На, вот возьми ее скорей!).[2]

This rhyming *rose*, however, was for a long time known by many other names: parody, romantic irony, *Sternian* influence,[3] a Russian example of Pope's 'sure returns of still-expected rhymes'.[4] Eventually, its 'meta' character was identified by Iurii Lotman, who described the lines quoted above as 'metatextual reflection on the problems of poetic technique'.[5]

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[2] A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 10 vols (Moscow-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1949), V: *Evgenii Onegin. Dramaticheskie proizvedeniia*, p. 93.

[3] Iu. N. Tynianov, 'O kompozitsii "Evgeniia Onegina"', in *Poetika, istoriia literatury, kino* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), pp. 52-78 (p. 68). Without acknowledging the source, Tynianov here refers to a contemporary anonymous review of *Evgenii Onegin* that mentioned its 'Sternian warts': 'наросты к рассказу, по примеру блаженной памяти Стерна.' Anonymous, 'Evgenii Onegin. Roman v stikhakh. Soch. Aleksandra Pushkina', *Atenei*, 2 (1828), 76-89 (p. 80).

[4] Vladimir Nabokov, 'Commentary to *Eugene Onegin*', in *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse*, trans. and comm. by Vladimir Nabokov, 4 vols (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1964), II: *Commentary on Preliminaries and Chapters One to Five*, pp. 470-71.

[5] '… некоторый метатекст, трактующий вопросы поэтической техники.' Iu. M. Lotman, *Roman A. S. Pushkina "Evgenii Onegin": Kommentarii. Posobie dlia uchitelia* (Leningrad: Prosveshenie, 1983), pp. 250-51. The immediate ontological conflict that this device provokes was also remarked on by Lotman: 'Такое построение характерно для всей литературно-полемической части главы: сталкиваются действительность и литература, причем первая характеризуется как истинная, а

As the definitions above show, it was not so much that this type of narrative strategies was previously unnoticed; rather, there was no single term to describe something so deeply rooted in the Russian poetic tradition.[6] To use Viktor Shklovskii's words, it has taken more than fifty years of numerous 'merry acts of destruction'[7] of the classical canon performed by literary scholars, to make this generalisation possible.

This thesis analyses the persistence of metafictional narrative strategies in nineteenth-century Russian literature, focussing particularly on examples from the 1860s – a decade when the debates on aesthetics fused the ideas of literary and political self-consciousness. In the following chapters, I first examine the theory of metafiction as it stands today, focussing on its engagement with Russian literature. I then present an analysis of metafiction's complex correlation with Russian realism and demonstrate that a convincing case can be made for a phenomenon of 'nineteenth-century Russian metafiction' that reached its peak in the mid-1860s. In order to do so, I offer a close reading of three literary texts of the period that feature prominent metafictional narrative strategies: Nikolai Chernyshevskii's *Chto delat'?* (1863), Aleksei Pisemskii's *Vzbalamuchennoe more* (1863) and Avdot'ia Panaeva's *Zhenskaia dolia* (1862) (published under the pen name 'Nikolai Stanitskii').

вторая – как подчёркнуто условная и ложная. Литературная фразеология, литературные ситуации и литературные характеры обесцениваются путем сопоставления с реальностью.' Ibid.

[6] Both Lotman and Nabokov consider these lines a direct polemic with and possibly even a quote from earlier lyrics by Zhukovskii and Sumarokov. Lotman examines this phenomenon in the context of renewed interest in the problems of Russian versification, resurrected in the 1810s because of discussions of Russian hexameter. Ibid.

[7] 'Почтить память можно не только каждением "благовонной травы", но веселым делом разрушения.' V. B. Shklovskii, '"Evgenii Onegin" (Pushkin i Stern)', in *Pushkin: Pro et contra*, ed. by V. M. Markovich and G. E. Potapova, 2 vols (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo russkogo khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta, 2000), I (2000), pp. 490-504 (p. 504).

Through a close reading of these three novels alongside a large number of private (diaries, letters, memoirs) and official legal and financial sources, this thesis aims to prove that metafictional narrative techniques featured prominently in Russian novels of the mid-1860s, when Russian culture in general became excessively politicised. It also suggests that the rise of self-conscious elements in fiction, mainly in the novel, coincided with the rise of ideological self-consciousness in readers and writers. Undermining the authority of 'grand' historical and social narratives is a functional characteristic of metafiction, and through questioning the ontological status of literature politically engaged novelists of the 1860s forced their audience to re-examine its ideological assumptions.

Moreover, the thesis reveals that self-consciousness is an inherent trait of the Russian novelistic tradition, and can be traced from the earliest examples of the genre in the late eighteenth century to the realist prose of the 1860s. It remained present in Russian fiction even when realism became the dominant literary aesthetic in the second half of the nineteenth century – a time, when such narrative practices were rare in the French and English novels. Moving on from the traditional critical focus on the nineteenth-century realist texts, my research establishes narrative metafiction to be an integral part of the Russian literary tradition.

Metafiction is a type of self-conscious fiction,[8] defined as 'fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact

[8] The narrative practice in question is interchangeably referred to either as 'metafiction' or 'self-conscious fiction' in the core studies on the subject, among which the most significant are: Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory And Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London; New York: Routledge, 1984); Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980); Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), Rudiger Imhof, *Contemporary Metafiction: a Poetological Study of Metafiction in English since 1939* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1986), Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), Inger

in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality'.[9] This type of narrative, often referred to as 'fiction with self-consciousness, self-awareness, self-knowledge, ironic self-distance',[10] has long been present in Russian literature.

Metafiction first came to the fore in Russian *belles-lettres* of the eighteenth century, towards the end of which fiction of this kind became popular under the influence of Laurence Sterne. In the first half of the nineteenth century, a widespread fashion for Romantic irony ensured the continuation of metafictional tendencies in Russian literature. With the advent of Realism in the 1840s, Russian self-conscious narratives did not go into 'eclipse', as, according to Robert Alter, happened in Europe.[11] Instead, they proliferated within an intellectual climate of heightened literary introspection and ideological self-awareness. And yet, remarkably few studies have examined this phenomenon.

The theory of metafiction has developed rapidly in the last fifty years. From early critical approaches to this phenomenon in literature to more recent enquiries into metanarrative strategies in historiography, metafiction has enjoyed significant critical attention. The term has been enthusiastically adopted in various fields, such as history, philosophy, linguistics, psychology, film and digital culture studies, and by disciplines as diverse as semiotics, poetics, narratology, studies of ideology and

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Christensen, *The Meaning of Metafiction: A Critical Study of Sterne, Nabokov, Barth and Beckett* (Bergen: Universitetsforlagen, 1981), Margaret A. Rose, *Parody//Meta-Fiction: An Analysis ofParody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction* (London: Croom Helm, 1979). Often, 'metafiction' assumes postmodernist connotations, whereas 'self-conscious fiction' remains a broad category, including almost any example of self-aware writing practice.

[9] Waugh, *Metafiction,* p. 2.

[10] Mark Currie, 'Introduction', in *Metafiction*, ed. and introduced by Mark Currie (London: Longman, 1995), pp. 1-21(p. 1).

[11] See, for example, Alter, 'The Self-Conscious Novel in Eclipse', in *Partial Magic*, pp. 84-138.

rhetoric, and genre theory.[12] Following the publication and enthusiastic reception of several landmark studies of the subject (Patricia Waugh, 1984; Rudiger Imhof, 1986; Linda Hutcheon, 1988), there emerged a single vocabulary to describe the research methods and findings across these varied fields.

This surge of interest in metapractices in the 1970s and 1980s was conditioned by developments in both literature and critical theory. Self-consciousness, though often found in fictional narratives of every historical period, became a characteristic feature of early twentieth-century modernist literature. Later, it turned into an almost obligatory component of late twentieth-century postmodernist narratives, which were ironically aware of their inescapable cultural and literary context. Naturally, an analytical apparatus needed to be developed to deal with these complex narrative issues. Considering how intertwined the notions of literary practice and literary criticism are in metafiction, it is not surprising that the term itself is generally thought to have been coined by American writer William H. Gass in the late 1960s.[13] Soon afterwards, in a series of essays, John Barth, also a professional writer, discussed the problem of metafiction as a critical and theoretical construct.[14] The idea was then taken up by critics and historians of literature, including Robert Scholes and Robert Alter, who were interested in the broader implications of the technique. A universal definition was formulated: any narrative explicitly conscious of its own ontological status can be considered metafictional.

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[12] For a comprehensive analysis of metafiction as a literary phenomenon and academic discipline see Currie, 'Introduction', in *Metafiction*, pp. 6-15; or, for a more partial review, Robert Spires, 'Introduction: The Metafictional Mode', in *Beyond the Metafictional Mode. Directions in the Modern Spanish Novel* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), pp. 1-18.

[13] William H. Gass, *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (New York: Knopf, 1970), p. 25.

[14] See, for instance, John Barth, 'The Literature of Exhaustion', *The Atlantic Monthly*, 220.2 (1967), 29-34.

Considering the trajectory of general critical theory in the postwar period, this 1970s-1980s focus on metafiction could be seen as almost inevitable. It followed, first, Roman Jakobson's application of Saussurean linguistics to literary analysis, then Roland Barthes's preoccupation with linguistic self-consciousness and, ultimately, Jacques Derrida's ideas on metalanguage and Paul de Man's deconstruction of rhetorical reflexivity.[15] In other words, the occurrence of such terms as 'metapolitics, metarhetoric and metatheatre' was 'a reminder of what has been, since the 1960s, a more general cultural interest in the problem of how human beings reflect, construct and mediate their experience of the world'.[16] Critics single out different reasons for the rise of this interest, from its socio-economic and historical context to the crisis of realism and the crisis of the novel. Nonetheless, most agree that the problematisation of language, represented by the concept of metalinguistics and the ideas of analytical philosophy, lies at the core of the modernist interest in and the postmodernist obsession with metafiction. [17]

Another point of consensus is the understanding that metafiction is by no means a recent phenomenon.[18] One must therefore be wary of historicising the development of metafiction solely in the context of the twentieth century and its intellectual achievements. Rather, we should assume that metafiction as *practice* existed for as long as fictional narratives themselves, but that it was only in the second half of the twentieth century that a *theory* of it could avail itself of the

[15] Currie, 'Introduction' in *Metafiction*, pp. 7-11. Hutcheon also singles out 'Jakobson and his model of communication' as the point after which literature and literary criticism have become increasingly self-conscious (Hutcheon*, Narcissistic Narrative*, p. xv).

[16] Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 2.

[17] See Imhof, *Contemporary Metafiction*, pp. 10, 32-33; Waugh, *Metafiction*, pp. 3, 7-13.

[18] With the notable exception of Patricia Waugh, who makes an argument towards the unique postmodern nature of metafiction as post-realist, post-mimetic narrative mode concerned mostly with the nature of representation and authenticity, but then also concedes that 'metafiction is a tendency or function inherent in all novels'. Waugh, ibid., p. 5, 31-33.

terminology developed in the philosophy of language and in linguistics. Theorists were finally able to describe in conceptual terms the narrative strategies that have always stood out as playful and subversive; an applied methodology was also formulated. The surge of interest in and widespread use of meta-analysis over the last forty years thus represented both the development and the culmination of a long tradition of self-consciousness in literature and criticism. Of course, Pushkin's readers have always been able to make sense of his playful 'rose rhyme', but, before the 1970s, theorists lacked a unified methodological apparatus with which to describe and analyse it.

Since the theory of metafiction was developed largely by Anglo-American critics, it is easy to see how a popular view of metafiction as a mode of narration practiced mostly in mid- or late twentieth-century literature, primarily written in English, has come into being. The major theoretical studies of metafiction tended to limit their corpus of texts to a small repertoire of American and British writers: John Barth, William H. Gass, Saul Bellow, Donald Barthelme, Vladimir Nabokov, Kurt Vonnegut, John Fowles, Martin Amis, Malcolm Bradbury, Anthony Burgess, Iris Murdoch, with an occasional foray into French (nouveau roman and anti-novel) and Latin American fiction, mostly Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar.[19]

In the majority of early studies, far more British and American novels were examined as examples of metafiction than Latin American and European novels. With the exception of Günter Grass and Vladimir Nabokov's Russian novels, few German or Russian writers were mentioned (even though Russian literary theory almost always gets an honorary citation).[20] Even historical accounts of the

[19] See Waugh (1984), Imhof (1986), Hutcheon (1980).

[20] See Waugh, ibid., p. 5 on metafiction making Bakhtin's idea of the dialogic potential of the novel explicit; or Hutcheon's chapter on parody that borrows heavily from Tynianov's theories: Linda

development of metafiction – which are, by their very nature, broader in their geographical and historical scope – tended to draw on the same rather limited pool of authors: Laurence Sterne, Cervantes, Diderot, André Gide, and Samuel Beckett.[21] And yet, it would be wrong to assume that metafiction can only be found in certain national literary traditions. Neither is it unique to Western literary culture: as a narrative practice, metafiction can be traced back both to ancient Chinese manuscripts[22] and early Greek and Roman texts.[23] In a way, it is as old as literary fiction itself.

As the study of metafiction matured as a field, its scope widened, both conceptually (critics have identified types of feminist, black, moral, ethical, historiographical, etc., metafiction) and geographically. In recent years, the theory has been applied to a wide variety of literatures outside the Anglo-American canon and seems to have made a significant contribution to the literary criticism of various national traditions and to comparative literary studies.

The theory of metafiction was incorporated into the field of Russian studies in the 1990s.[24] Its brief chronology can be traced from David Shepherd's *Beyond*

Hutcheon, 'Thematising Narrative Artifice: Parody, Allegory, and the Mise En Abyme', in *Narcissistic Narrative*, pp. 48-58.

[21] See Alter (1975), Christensen (1986).

[22] Y. H. Zhao, 'The Rise of Metafiction in China', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 55, 1 (1992), 90-99 (p. 95).

[23] Owen Hodkinson, *Metafiction in Classical Literature: The Invention of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

[24] Gary Saul Morson's 1978 article ('Reading between the Genres: Dostoevsky's *Diary of a Writer* as Metafiction', *Yale Review*, 68 [1978], 224-34), was published well ahead of the 1990s but draws on methodology that precedes works by Scholes, Hutcheon and Waugh. Morson looks at *Diary of a Writer* as 'fiction about the nature of fiction making'; and sees it as consisting of 'metastatements', or 'semifictions'. Morson's analysis is based on the findings of Gregory Bateson's 'meta-science' theory (*Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972) and Erving Goffman's

Metafiction: Self-Consciousness in Soviet Literature (1992), via Mark Lipovetskii's *Russkii postmodernizm: ocherki istoricheskoi poetiki* (1997), to Nina Kolesnikoff's *Russian Postmodernist Metafiction* (2001).

Most studies of Russian metafiction use the methodology of narrative analysis suggested by Patricia Waugh and Linda Hutcheon, with one notable exception: Dmitrii M. Segal's 1981 articles 'Literatura kak okhrannaia gramota*'* and 'Literatura kak vtorichnaia modeliruiushchaia sistema',[25] both products of an important scholarly approach to metafiction that originated in Russia. In his articles, Segal did not use the term 'metafiction', but talked about 'metapoetics' [метапоэтика] as a characteristic feature of a number of modernist Russian texts by Konstantin Vaginov, Osip Mandel'shtam, Vasilii Rozanov, Vladimir Nabokov, Mikhail Bulgakov, Boris Pasternak and Anna Akhmatova. Even though Segal saw literary self-consciousness [самосознание литературы] as an inherent characteristic of Russian literature in general,[26] he considered it 'a reaction on the part of literature towards an outside intrusion, a response to the removal of the realist tradition'[27] at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Segal argued that, even though such texts as Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin* (1833), Gogol''s *Mertvye dushi* (1842) and, later, Dostoevskii's *Dnevnik pisatelia* (1873-81) were obviously metafictional – a fact that allowed for them to be identified as examples of 'secondary modelling systems' – this quality was nevertheless not

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ideas of 'frame analysis' (*Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975)).

[25] D. M. Segal, 'Literatura kak vtorichnaia modeliruiushchaia sistema', in *Literatura kak okhrannaia gramota* (Moscow: Vodolei, 2006), pp. 11-50; 'Literatura kak okhrannaia gramota', in ibid., pp. 50-156.

[26] '…специфически российской традиции литературного моделирования.' Ibid., pp. 52-3.

[27] Ibid., p. 68.

pronounced strongly enough to challenge the traditional perception of Russian classical texts as 'primary modelling systems' (i.e. unmediated models of reality). Segal explored the possibility of 'secondary modelling' as a uniquely modernist phenomenon, thus firmly situating the concept of Russian metapoetics in the twentieth century.

Fifteen years later, an impressive argument for the applicability of the theory of metafiction to Russian literature was made by David Shepherd in his study of Soviet metafiction, *Beyond Metafiction: Self-Consciousness in Soviet literature*. Shepherd's book includes a broad account of the appropriation of the theory of metafiction and its analytical apparatus by scholars working in Russian studies. In a survey of Western studies of metafiction, Shepherd notes that although Russian literary theory has been widely influential (especially Formalism and its ideas of 'laying bare of the device' and 'estrangement'), Russian fiction has rarely been used as material for metafictional analysis (Shepherd blamed this on the 'residual parochialism' of literary theorists).[28]

Considering the geographical scope of the texts to which theorists usually made reference, this omission is indeed difficult to explain. After all, there is 'a considerable body of writing in Russian literature since at least the early nineteenth century, […] whose metafictional qualities have frequently been remarked upon'.[29] Following previous accounts of the metafictional tradition in Europe, Shepherd attributed the metafictional characteristics of early nineteenth-century Russian fiction to a fascination with Laurence Sterne, whose *Sentimental Journey* (1768, trans. 1789) and *Tristram Shandy* (1759, trans. 1804-07) were popular in Russia at the

[28] David Shepherd, *Beyond Metafiction: Self-Consciousness in Soviet Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 3.

[29] Ibid., p. 4.

time. He then singled out a few nineteenth-century Russian writers who employed 'more or less sophisticated metafictional strategies': Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, Odoevskii, Pogodin, Senkovskii, and Vel'tman.[30] Shepherd argues that this development was caused by a self-conscious debate about the nature of the literary profession itself. He agrees with Gary Saul Morson's assertion of the metafictional potential of nineteenth-century Russian literature generally ('Russian literature is deliberately and self-consciously made up of forms which have usually been considered to straddle the boundaries art')[31], and cited Chernyshevskii, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Gertsen, Tolstoi, Chekhov and Dostoevskii as writers realising this potential in their texts.

Shepherd's survey made it clear that, despite the critical interest in metafiction in Russian literature before modernism, no comprehensive research has been carried out on that period. Nineteenth-century Russian metafiction had only ever been approached in the context of its influence on modernist writing and Shepherd's study conformed to the traditional approach. His research examined the specifics of self-conscious fiction written in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, with a focus on the texts of Leonid Leonov, Marietta Shaginian, Konstantin Vaginov and Veniamin Kaverin. Engaging equally with the Russian and the Anglo-American critical traditions, Shepherd made the first, much-needed step towards an integration of Russian and Western approaches to metafiction.

[30] Ibid., p. 4-5.

[31] Gary Saul Morson, 'Reading between the Genres: Dostoevsky's *Diary of a Writer* as metafiction', p. 225.

Another contribution towards an integration of the two critical approaches was Mark Lipovetskii's study, *Russkii postmodernizm: ocherki istoricheskoi poetiki*.[32] Lipovetskii revised Segal's approach to Russian modernist metanarratives in the light of contemporary theories of metafiction, as developed by Waugh, Hutcheon, Imhof and Christensen. He then applied the methodology that he had developed to texts by Vladimir Nabokov, Andrei Bitov, Viktor Erofeev, Venedikt Erofeev, Sasha Sokolov, Tat'iana Tolstaia, Viacheslav Pietsukh and Dmitrii Prigov.

Segal's insights and frequent use of the prefix 'meta-' in Russian structuralism (as in Iurii Lotman's commentary to Pushkin cited above) helped Lipovetskii to argue for the applicability of the theory of metafiction to modernist and postmodernist Russian prose. In Russian scholarship, Lipovetskii's study remains a rare example of a work on the subject that is aware of its Western counterparts. Russian scholars trace the history of Russian studies of metafiction back to the Moscow-Tartu school, and the works of such scholars as Z. Mints, I. Smirnov, R. Timenchik, V. Toporov, Iu. Lotman and others.[33] This can, of course, be explained as a consequence of the same 'residual parochialism' described by Shepherd, but the fact remains that the application of the theory of metafiction to Russian literature continues to be marginal.

[32] This study first came out in Russian in 1997 as *Russkii postmodernizm: ocherki istoricheskoi poetiki* (Ekaterinburg: Ural'skii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet, 1997) and then two years later in English as *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

[33] See for example, M. A. Khatiamova, *Formy literaturnoi samorefleksii v russkoi proze pervoi treti XX veka* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2008). The study quoted above is a good example of the 'isolationist' policy of Russian studies on metafiction. Almost none of the theories of self-consciousness or metanarrative developed outside of the Russian-speaking world are cited or taken into account in this study.

More recently, in 2011, the case for a uniquely Russian metafiction was made in Nina Kolesnikoff's study *Russian Postmodernist Metafiction.*[34] Kolesnikoff's approach to theory was more technical than in other works on Russian metafiction. Rather than rehashing theoretical notions that had, by then, been widely accepted, she created an original model for the analysis of postmodernist Russian texts. Having chosen Sarah Lauzen's tabulation of different self-conscious narrative techniques (constructed on the basis of Linda Hutcheon's theory),[35] Kolesnikoff proceeded to use them to describe the narrative strategies, metafictional plot structures, characters, settings, and styles of Russian postmodernist texts by Andrei Bitov, Evgenii Popov, Aleksandr Kabakov, Iulia Kisina, Liudmila Petrushevskaia, and others, thus firmly establishing the theory of metafiction as a valid approach to postmodernist Russian texts.

This brief survey highlights two notable characteristics of studies of metafiction in Russian literature. The first thing to note is that it took almost ten years for the theories developed in the 1970s and 1980s to reach Russian studies. The critical and historical contexts that had accelerated the development of the theory of metafiction in other traditions had simply taken longer to appear in this field in Russia. Secondly, Shepherd, Lipovetskii and Kolesnikoff built a convincing case for Russian metafiction, and yet dealt only with twentieth-century literary texts. It would be easy to explain this limitation as a natural consequence of employing a theory devised to deal with modernist and postmodernist texts, and yet it seems that there is a more serious methodological issue at stake.

[34] Nina Kolesnikoff, *Russian Postmodernist Metafiction* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011).

[35] Sarah E. Lauzen, 'Notes on Metafiction', in *Postmodern Fiction: Bio-Bibliographical Guide*, ed. by Larry McCaffery (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 93-116.

Most major theorists of metafiction point out that it has a long and international history as a narrative practice. Particularly strong cases are made for two novels: Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605) and Laurence's Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759). The failure to acknowledge these two precursors of modern metafiction is often seen as 'a-historical' and counterproductive. Contemporary metafiction can even be seen as 'a derivative of historical forms of the same fictional mode' as the novels of Cervantes and Sterne,[36] or traced back directly to the eighteenth century, comparing Nabokov, Barth and Beckett to Sterne in particular.[37]

Metafiction's long lineage was acknowledged by its leading theorist, Linda Hutcheon, who added Denis Diderot to the list of indisputably metafictional writers. Hutcheon insisted that 'metafiction is not new', going as far as to argue for a separate metafictional tradition chronologically parallel with that of classical realism: Sterne alongside Richardson and Defoe, Diderot preceding Balzac.[38] Hutcheon saw the modern novels that she was most interested in ('a kind of fiction which began to run rampant in the 1960s')[39] as heirs to earlier, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works of fiction, with their 'critical awareness and diegetic self-consciousness'.[40] According to Hutcheon, the difference between those narratives and contemporary metafictions is 'only in the degree of internalized self-consciousness about the […] realities of reading all literature'.[41]

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[36] Rudiger Imhof, *Contemporary Metafiction: A Poetological Study of Metafiction in English since 1939*, p. 33.

[37] Inger Christensen, *The Meaning of Metafiction: A Critical Study of Sterne, Nabokov, Barth and Beckett* (Bergen: Universitetsforlagen, 1981).

[38] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, pp. 8-9.

[39] Ibid., p. 1.

[40] Ibid., p. 44.

[41] Ibid., p. 8.

For critics such as Imhof, Chistensen and Hutcheon, the application of the methodological apparatus of metafiction to texts from before the 1960s is not only possible, but absolutely essential for their understanding of modern texts. There is among them a shared understanding that tracing the lineage of metanarratives is necessary for placing them in the history of literature and isolating their influence on later literary works.[42]

There are, however, two conclusive and well-developed arguments specifically against applying this methodology to nineteenth-century literature put forward by Waugh and Alter, two critics whose works are fundamental for the theory's development. According to Waugh's theory of metafiction, in the twentieth century authorial intervention in a narrative acquired a particular philosophical significance that it had previously lacked. The difference, she argues, lies in the ontology of the text: if postmodernist writers try to highlight the artificiality of their narratives, nineteenth-century prose and poetry mostly use this device to prove that the action discussed did indeed take place in the past, and that the narrator witnessed, recorded or somehow otherwise stored it in her memory. The use of self-conscious narration becomes an aid in the exercise of authentication.

Noting that, 'although the term "metafiction" might be new, the practice is as old (if not older) than the novel itself' and that 'metafiction is a tendency or function inherent in all novels',[43] Waugh then proceeds to argue that there is an 'intuitive

[42] See also Segal, *Literatura kak okhrannaia gramota,* p. 52: 'Представляется, что указанные тексты не только входят неотъемлемой частью в европейскую романную традицию (в понимании Бахтина и Шкловского), образуя единый ряд с такими жанрово различными вещами, как "Дон-Кихот", "Тристам Шенди", "Евгений Онегин", но функционируют и в более широком культурном плане как семиотическая программа литературной действительности России после революции.'

[43] Waugh, *Metafiction,* p. 5. Waugh's position interestingly echoes Segal's opinion on the limitations of pre-modernist metafictions.

sense that although Fielding, Trollope and George Eliot, for example, often "break the frame" of their novels they are by no means self-conscious novelists'.[44] Pre-postmodern self-conscious narratives cannot be defined as metafictions because, in order to make a statement about the ontological status of fiction through metalanguage, the author has to have an understanding of what metalanguage is. And such an understanding, in Waugh's opinion, is only gained though the insights of the postmodernist philosophy of language, developed by an array of philosophers from Ludwig Wittgenstein to Louis Hjelmslev.

According to Waugh, in the nineteenth century, metalinguistic commentary in novels reaffirmed the ontological statuses of the narrator and the reader, reinforcing the mimetic illusion. In a functioning metafiction, on the contrary, the illusion should be broken by the narrator's intrusion, drawing the reader's attention to the need to suspend disbelief. Waugh proves her argument by comparing the narrative techniques used in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) and in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969).

If Eliot, introducing the figure of the self-conscious narrator, barely manages to break the frame of mimetic narration, in Fowles, 'it is not just the mimetic function of the traditional novel that is attacked in metafiction, it is the language of the realistic novel which has sustained and endorsed such a view of reality'.[45] Most theoretical accounts of metafiction discuss the notion of metalanguage, but in Waugh's study it assumes a defining position. Therefore, she considers all pre-postmodern instances of metafiction to be no more than 'formal' occurrences. This is precisely how she refers to Sterne and Cervantes, defining them as writers who simply developed the formal techniques that were later adopted by genuine

[44] Ibid., p. 31-33.

[45] Ibid., p. 11.

metafictionalists.[46] The self-consciousness that Waugh acknowledges in Sterne is purely linguistic, an example of the 'implicit tendency of the novel to draw attention to its linguistic construction'.[47] Waugh is not convinced by the existence of pre-twentieth century 'functioning' metafiction, nor is she interested in applying the theory retrospectively.

Robert Alter's *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-conscious Genre* was published in 1975 and preceded what is now perceived as a definitive theory of metafiction. In his study, which comprises an examination of the works of Cervantes, Sterne, Diderot and Nabokov ('a chronological sequence of major self-conscious novels from the seventeenth century to the present'),[48] Alter dedicates an entire chapter to the nineteenth century, the era when, in his opinion, self-conscious narrative techniques were sidelined by more frequent mimetic representations of reality. Alter's declaration of the eclipse of the self-conscious novel in the nineteenth century was in fact a broader claim that accounted for the parallel development of metafictional and realistic narrative traditions.

The nineteenth-century novel, in Alter's view, was characterised by 'fits and starts' of self-consciousness, since around the 1830s realism became 'the central impulse of the novel': writers laboured over detailed descriptions of the surrounding world, rather than examining the ontological status of such descriptions. In other words, nineteenth-century writers had put so much effort into creating a life-like illusion of reality in their narratives that any self-conscious allusions would have been seen as undermining this illusion. Alter refers to major nineteenth-century novelists, including Balzac and Flaubert, as 'imaginists', suggesting that the main

[46] Ibid., p. 23.

[47] Ibid., p. 67.

[48] Alter, *Partial Magic*, p. xiv.

thing that sets them apart from their more self-conscious predecessors was the new way in which they engage with history.

In the nineteenth century, the detailed documentation of historical change assumed a more important position than the exploration of the medium through which these changes were recorded. Nineteenth-century novelists, according to Alter, were concerned not with the question of 'what literature is', but with the question of 'what it is good for'. Thus, any instances of self-consciousness in nineteenth-century novels (in, for example, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) or Melville's *Confidence Man* (1857)) are discarded as 'discontinuous, incomplete'.[49] Unlike Waugh, Alter is not categorically opposed to the use of the theory to pre-postmodernist texts, and yet he insists on the almost complete absence of metanarrative in nineteenth-century realist prose.

Essentially, both Waugh and Alter argue that the mimetic impulse in the nineteenth century was too strong to allow any novelistic self-consciousness to flourish in the same way in which it had beforehand or did afterwards. They discussed the dominance of realist narrative techniques, prominent in European literatures of the period, as a trend that was incompatible with expressions of literary self-consciousness. At first glance, this position seems logical and well argued. I suggest, however, that a close examination of literary self-consciousness as a narrative strategy of metafiction shows that it misrepresents European realism in general and misinterprets Russian realism specifically.

In her study *Reading Realism in Stendhal* (1988), Ann Jefferson built a conclusive case against such a reading of European realism. She starts her exploration of Stendhal's poetics with a note on contemporary metafictional critical

[49] Ibid., p. 116.

theory that tends to recast the history of European fiction 'in order to downgrade the great tradition of nineteenth century realism, and to make way for a rehabilitation of fiction in its largely playful and self-conscious guise'.[50] In the world of post-Saussurean literary theory ('not a promising conceptual base for a constructive theory of realism'),[51] 'the novelist who merely seeks to provide an objective representation of contemporary social reality'[52] becomes too dull an object of research. The supposedly universal awareness of the illusory nature of any linguistically recreated reality produces a 'deadlock in which realism is bound to appear as theoretically uninteresting, and self-consciousness as incompatible with mimesis'.[53]

Reading Realism in Stendhal suggests that the dichotomy of realistic/metafictional has not only been artificially imposed by twentieth-century literary theorists, but has also been counterproductive in terms of its implications for the study of realism. Stendhal, as Jefferson maintains, was 'as metafictional and as self-conscious a writer as any twentieth-century novelist', but his aesthetic aim, nonetheless, was to reproduce reality as faithfully as possible. Already a published author by the end of the eighteenth century, Stendhal brought the heightened self-consciousness and didacticism typical of that time to a nineteenth-century tradition more concerned with the truthful representation of reality and mores. His focus on the reader as an object of emotional manipulation through mimesis ('reading for effect') and at the same time his preoccupation with reality 'in its representational

[50] Ann Jefferson, *Reading Realism in Stendhal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. xi.

[51] Ibid., p. xii. Considering the methodological framework proposed by M. Finke in *Metapoesis*, we can also call this era 'post-Jakobsonian'. In the introduction to his study, Finke outlines the Jakobsonian model of communication as a basis of metapoetics. See Michael C. Finke, *Metapoesis: the Russian Tradition from Pushkin to Chekhov* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 6-8.

[52] Jefferson, ibid., p. xii.

[53] Ibid., p. xii.

form' proves that 'realism is not incompatible with literary self-consciousness, and that mimesis is a vital counterpart to metafiction'.[54] Jefferson's counterargument primarily concerns Stendhal, but it sheds light on the general assumptions that metafictional literary criticism makes about nineteenth-century literature.

Jefferson's well-argued understanding of realism as a 'more self-conscious and sophisticated phenomenon than it has hitherto been conceived as being'[55] is one I adopted in my own study. Russian realism tends to be defined even more narrowly than its European counterparts, since, for the best part of the twentieth century, the basic assumption of Soviet and much Marxist literary criticism was that realism is the ultimate aesthetic goal of the literary process. It was therefore as easy to find 'certain features' of realism in the work of 'pre-realist writers such as Pushkin [and] Gogol''[56] as it was to overlook the metafictional elements in texts by the same authors. The existence of a self-conscious literary tradition in Russia hardly needs to be argued. Even a cursory knowledge of nineteenth-century Russian literature is enough to enable a reader to spot instances of highly self-conscious narration in Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol', Dostoevskii and Tolstoi, among others. But, for many years, Soviet critics' insistence on the importance of realism[57] hindered the development of a theoretical approach to the tradition in Russia, whereas, in Slavic studies in the West, it was the reputation of nineteenth-century Russian novels as the ultimate realist fiction that stood in its way.

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[54] Ibid., p. xiii.

[55] Ibid., p. 4.

[56] Victor Terras, 'Realism', in *Handbook of Russian Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 363-67 (p. 365).

[57] See, for example, Rene Wellek's insightful 'outsider's' view of the Soviet debate on realism in 'The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship', in *Concepts of Criticism*, ed. by Stephen G. Nichols, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 222-256 (p. 222-223).

Indeed, the Russian literary tradition, especially that of the second half of the nineteenth century, is perceived as a string of realist masterpieces. From Henry James's definition of the 'big baggy monsters'[58] to the generally accepted view of Tolstoi's influence on the novelistic genre, Russian literature is most lauded for its realist novels. This trend is understandable: there is nothing more compelling than a well-crafted mimetic narrative that completely immerses the reader in the events described. It takes a degree of literary sophistication, though, to notice the different kinds of realist narrative techniques practiced in the period. For example, Lidia Ginzburg pointed out a qualitative connection between Tolstoi's psychological introspection and self-referential representation of 'pure psychological processes' in the French *nouveau roman* of the 1950s-60s.[59] In Tolstoi, running authorial commentary and shifts in narrative focalisation should, in theory, compromise the idea of narrative verisimilitude. And yet, his texts are exemplary mimetic and realist.

The first secular and original prose experiments in Russia (if still close to folklore and the oral tradition) were the Petrine tales, which, by the mid-eighteenth century, gave way to what are widely held to have been the first Russian novels: Fedor Emin's *Nepostoiannaia fortuna, ili Pokhozhdeniia Miramonda* (1763), Mikhail Chulkov's *Prigozhaia povarikha* (1770) and Matvei Komarov's *Milord Dzhordzh* (1782). In his study *The Rise of the Russian Novel: Carnival, Stylization, and Mockery of the West*, David Gasperetti argued against the common view that, in the eighteenth century, 'Russian writers, especially novelists, are supposed to have indiscriminately imitated a vast array of foreign models'.[60] Gasperetti believed that

[58] Henry James, 'From the Preface to *The Tragic Muse*', in *The Portable Henry James*, ed. by John Auchard (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 476-477 (p. 477).

[59] Lidiia Ginzburg, *O psikhologicheskoi proze* (Moscow: Intrada, 1999), p. 244.

[60] David Gasperetti, *The Rise of the Russian Novel: Carnival, Stylization, and Mockery of the West* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), p. 4. Gasperetti's notes on continuous

the authors' response to Western culture was 'more circumspect': Emin, Chulkov and Komarov were imitators of Western literary styles, yet, in many ways, they 'attacked these conventions as being incapable of representing Russian cultural reality'.[61] Using a particular type of metaliterary parody – stylisation – early Russian novelists questioned 'not just the conventions but the very worldview that prevailed in the foreign-inspired literature of their day'.[62]

Thus, the very first appropriation of the novelistic form in Russia was acutely self-conscious, questioning the ability of an essentially foreign form to accommodate a native reality and, typically for metafiction, challenging the 'uncritical acceptance of the authority of the written word'.[63] Because of the authors' nationalist and aesthetic concerns, the novel, already inherently self-conscious as a form, became even more so in eighteenth-century Russia. The 'strong metaliterary impulse'[64] can be charted from early Russian novels into the nineteenth century, a period in which the novel remained a popular but still unstable form.

Perhaps the otherwise inexplicable growth[65] and success of the novel in Russia in the nineteenth century can be explained partly by the genre's intense self-awareness. For almost a century until the 1870s, when Turgenev's popularity won Russian novels an international prominence and made them into a marketable export, Russia's most brilliant literary minds were experimenting with the genre. The

misinterpretation of Chulkov's works (seen as imitative instead of metaliterary) due to an 'allure of the imitative mindset with regard to eighteenth century Russia' (p. 13) further explain the tendency to overlook metafictional elements in Russian novels, discussed above.

[61] Ibid., p. 4.

[62] Ibid., p. 5.

[63] Ibid., p. 66.

[64] Ibid.

[65] See Richard Freeborn, *The Rise of the Russian Novel: Studies in the Russian Novel from 'Eugene Onegin' to 'War and Peace'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 1: 'The swiftness of the genre's growth from such modest beginnings is startling.'

tendency to replace the mimesis of product (reality) with the mimesis of process (portraying reality)[66] – a sure sign of the dominance of self-consciousness in literary narratives – was prioritised in the three most prominent pre-realist Russian novels of the nineteenth century: Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin*, Lermontov's *Geroi nashego vremeni* and Gogol''s *Mertvye dushi*. The twentieth-century canonisation of these texts as classics 'smoothed away much of their abrasiveness, that is, their self-consciousness and critical intentionality',[67] and yet these very features remained a constant in the Russian novelistic tradition of subsequent years.

The best-selling book of the early 1830s, Faddei Bulgarin's picaresque novel *Ivan Vyzhigin, ili russkii Gil Blas* (1829), though popular with the readers, struck the literary public as outdated and kitsch, as Pushkin was quick to notice.[68] Pushkin himself was interested in a different kind of novelistic genre: an experimental, introspective, still uncertain form whose inherent metafictional potential could be teased out through the contemporary fashion for Romantic irony. Pushkin's intention was to write an experimental novel in verse, exploring the boundaries of the genre, observing how it functions and sharing these observations with his readers. Meanwhile, Lermontov's psychological insights into Pechorin's incessant introspection advanced 'self-consciousness as a national trait of the Russian literary

[66] Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, p. 4.

[67] William Mills Todd III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 8.

[68] On Pushkin's uneasy relationship with Bulgarin see Vas. Gippius, 'Pushkin v bor'be s Bulgarinym v 1830-1831 gg.', *Pushkin: Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii,* 6 (1941), 235-55. For more on Bulgarin's rise to fame and fortune see A. I. Reitblat*, Faddei Venediktovich Bulgarin: ideolog, zhurnalist, konsul'tant sekretnoi politsii: Stat'i i materialy* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2016). Unfortunately, there is currently no comprehensive study of the reading tastes in Russia pre-1861, as Jeffrey Brook's work covers only period from 1861 onwards. See Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

tradition'.[69] In 1842, the publication of *Mertvye dushi* further established self-consciousness as a significant trend in the development of the novel in Russia. Gogol''s parodic work, wavering between romantic irony and realist representation, was a masterpiece precisely because it never settled for one or the other.

Alongside the magisterial novelistic tradition, which would later be critically re-conceptualised as pre-realist,[70] there ran a secondary line of metafictional narratives aimed at less sophisticated readers: Aleksandr Vel'tman's *Strannik* (1831), Vladimir Odoevskii's *Russkie nochi* (1843), as well as Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii's novellas, were 'part and parcel of the ferment of the institutionalization and the professionalization of Russian letters'.[71] Unlike its European counterpart, this line did not run in separation from the realist canon; it merged with it, picking out metafictional strategies from the commonly shared pool of literary devices and professional anxieties.

In fact, Russian realism has always followed a path of its own. As a literary movement, Realism reached Russia later than Germany and England, approximately twenty years after it had originated in France in the 1830s. It was, arguably, all the

[69] Donna Tussing Orwin, *Consequences of Consciousness: Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 10. Orwin makes a point that echoes Gasperetti's, assessing metaliterary techniques as a way of coping with foreign cultural influences: 'Russian psychological prose emphasises self-consciousness and its effects. This characteristic developed partly because Russian acquired their knowledge of modern individualism through foreign models. Raised in a society that privileged the communal over the individual, they could not completely internalise behaviour that they admired and imitated, so they began to observe themselves from a distance, and ironically. First imitation of foreign models, and then the psychological effect of this behaviour in turn became a well-known theme in Russian fiction.' Ibid.

[70] Terras discusses the process and consequences of Soviet reconceptualization of the nineteenth century Russian canon in Terras, *Realism*, p. 365.

[71] Shepherd, *Beyond Metafiction*, p. 5.

more intensive for having arrived late.[72] The difference between 'the use of the term "realism" in reporting French developments and the adoption of the term as a slogan for a local school of realistic writing'[73] was more prominent in Russia than anywhere else. Vissarion Belinskii's conceptualisation of Russian realist trends as the 'natural'naia' and, later, 'gogolevskaia' school of writing was illuminating in this respect. Gogol', hailed by Belinskii as a 'poet of reality' and the 'absolute truth of life',[74] was a good example of the gap between the general contemporary understanding of realism and what Russian critics of the period took it to be. Extremely self-conscious, often relying on the ultimate metafictional device of parody,[75] Gogol' was also, according to Belinskii, a realist, but a Russian one. It is precisely this specific understanding of realism in Russia that explains why self-consciousness did not go into eclipse in nineteenth-century Russian literature: Russian realism did not insist on abandoning self-consciousness. If anything, it promoted it.

Belinskii's idea of realism, which adaptated the critical apparatus of German aesthetics to the contemporary Russian literary process, showcased, among other

[72] For a timeline of the development of Russian realism, see Victor Terras, 'Realism', pp. 363-7.

[73] Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism,* p. 229.

[74] 'Поэт жизни действительной', 'совершенной истины жизни' in V. G. Belinskii, 'O russkoi povesti i povestiakhh g. Gogolia ("Arabeski" i "Mirgorod")' in *N. V. Gogol' v vospominaniakh sovremennikov*, ed. by S. I. Mashinskii (Moscow: GIKHL, 1952), pp. 340-48.

[75] In *Metapoesis*, Finke presents an insightful analysis of Gogol''s *Teatral'nyi ra''ezd posle predstavleniia novoi komedii* (1836; 1842), championing its metapoetic nature. Finke argues that this 'playlet' presented Gogol''s metapoetic musings on the nature of communication between the dramatist and his public in contemporary theatre. Written as a reaction to the staging of *Revizor* (1836), the play was ostensibly about the author's attempts to find out how the public reacted to his latest play. However, Finke suggests that the play was 'overtly about poetics, from start to finish' (p. 24) and should be read in the framework of the poetics of vaudeville – the most popular dramatic genre in Russia at the time when Gogol''s plays were staged. The play's 'self-reflexivity and flaunting of generic rules' worked to the effect of producing 'in the wider public the shock of recognition and greater understanding of its own responses'. Michael C. Finke, *Metapoesis,* p. 30.

things, a tendency in Russian realism, more promiment than in its Western counterparts, to rely on the narrative legacy of Romanticism, particularly – and this is of specific interest to the argument made here – on Romantic irony. Certain 'Romantic' qualities of Russian realism have long been noted, and Donald Fanger's argument about the 'Romantic realism' of Gogol' and Dostoevskii was based on the assumption that 'a whole stage in [the novel's] nineteenth-century development, which up to now has been uneasily called romanticism or realism, is really marked by a fusion of the two'.[76]

Due to this overlap, Realism and Romanticism had multiple points of convergence in the Russian prose of the period. Even though the start and end dates of literary movements are never as chronologically precise as the histories of literature would have us believe, in nineteenth-century Russia, the contemporary literary canon included a surprisingly wide array of texts from different literary epochs. In *Evgenii Onegin* (1823-31), an encyclopedia of educated Russians' literary tastes, Tat'iana reads the English sentimental novels of her mother's youth, whereas Lenskii prefers German Romantic poetry and Onegin favoures Byronic poetry and French prose. Lermontov's Pechorin, in his turn, is under the spell of late Byronism of the 1830s and 40s, just as *Geroi nashego vremeni* (1838-1840) is a product of Lermontov's fascination with the prose of Alfred de Musset and Benjamin Constant.[77]

By the 1840s, Russian writers were fully immersed in post-Romantic literary endeavours, such as the further development of psychological prose. Simultaneously,

[76] Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. vii.

[77] For more on the transformation of aesthetic ideals into social and self-representation in Pushkin, Lermontov and Gogol', see Todd, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin*.

a different type of realist narrative, also aiming to reach the heights of realistic representation, by different means and with a different motivation, was gaining momentum. The French naturalist school of writing, inspired by the use of photography and the descriptive narratives of the nascent social sciences, such as anthropology and experimental psychology, was becoming more and more influential in Russia. Journalistic and literary pieces were presented to the public side by side through the all-encompassing medium of 'thick journals', blurring the line between fact and fiction and popularising examples of the truthful representation of contemporary reality, written 'dispassionately, impersonally, objectively'.[78]

The basic paradox of realist writing in general – the attempt to depict reality faithfully through a process that itself transforms it – brings about a heightened self-reflexivity in its practitioners. If Romantic narratives were concerned about the emotional effect they were producing on their readers, realist narratives often made reference to their own ontological status, the degree of verisimilitude achieved and the relative similarity of the story to a reader's own circumstances. In Russia, this heightened literary self-consciousness reached its peak in the 1860s, when literature, alongside other forms of public debate, became a forum for discussing political and social issues.

In Russia, prose gained an equal standing with poetry by the end of the first half of the century, surpassing it in seriousness and eventually becoming the medium of choice for literary expression and open debate. In this unique intellectual climate, it became increasingly important for those involved in literary production to establish patterns of interaction between literature and reality. Both critics and writers were constantly engaged in the process of working out not only the degree of

[78] Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism*, p. 228. On contemporary tensions between 'realism' and 'naturalism' across Europe and Russia, see ibid., pp. 233-38.

'truthfulness' of any given narrative, but, more importantly, its ideological value as well.

At first glance, metafiction – introspective, playful, and self-centered – should be concerned least of all with ideology. And yet, despite its narcissism,[79] self-conscious fiction is no less concerned with the world outside its boundaries than with itself. One of its primary and universally acknowledged aims is to examine the epistemological and ontological relation of narrative to reality (with reality often personalised in the figure of an implied reader) external to the fictional world. Its secondary but no less important function is highlighting the philosophical and ideological implications of the nature of these relations.

Postmodern literary and historiographical metafictions challenged dominant narratives through inspecting the principles of their linguistic construction. Defamiliarisation, a technique adopted in self-conscious fiction, made the linguistic structures of power visible by transferring self-awareness from the text to the reader, thus problematising the usual effect produced by the dominant narrative. It aimed 'to demystify power […] to reveal it in all its arbitrariness' to 'call attention to authority structures in such a way as to subvert the Romantic ideology of the myth of originality that once subtended them'.[80]

In the concluding chapter of the first edition of *Metafiction* (1984), Waugh noted that the question of whether aesthetically 'radical' texts are also politically radical is an issue of 'crucial importance', 'which may only be resolved once post-

[79] Linda Hutcheon's entire study is an appropriation of 'other potentially pejorative terms, such as introspective, introverted, and self-conscious, [that] are likewise meant to be critically neutral' (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative,* p. 1).

[80] Ibid., p. xvi.

modernism has itself become a post-phenomenon'.[81] In the past thirty years, the rise of metafiction as a critical discipline has demonstrated the crucial role played by ideological self-awareness for this narrative mode. It is no surprise that metafiction developed particular ideological subtypes, such as 'feminist' or 'black', dealing with the collective consciousness of a social group that questioned the conventions defining its way of life. This type of fiction examined how such groups were represented in dominant narratives and then, through appropriation and reclaiming, forged a new discursive and political identity for them.[82] The political subplot in postmodern metafiction was already apparent in the texts of its early practitioners, such as the *Tel Quel* group in France and *Gruppo 63* in Italy, partly because of the heightened ideological self-consciousness of the 1960s, but also because ideological self-awareness remains the most fundamental feature of metafiction of any period. By nature of being self-conscious, it questions – linguistically, philosophically and politically – manifestations of the ideological status quo in contemporary culture.

Waugh's argument against the application of the theory of metafiction to pre-postmodern texts rests on the assumption of a lack of ideological self-consciousness in nineteenth-century authors. Frame-breaking narratives, the critic maintains, did not challenge the ultimate mimetic illusion but, on the contrary, reinforced it, precisely because the authors saw no danger in accepting a linguistically constructed picture of reality as one that is actually true.[83] But was this type of worldview really such an obstacle to enquiries into the ontological status of fiction and its ideological implications?

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[81] Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 149.

[82] See, for example, Madelyn Jablon, *Black Metafiction: Self-Consciousness in African American Literature* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997).

[83] Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 31-33.

To continue with Ann Jefferson's argument, it would have never occurred to Stendhal, 'living in the age of positivism […] to doubt the reality of reality'.[84] And yet he was preoccupied by the fact that 'representations have their own stylistic momentum as well as mimetic veracity and […] that copying of nature cannot easily be safeguarded'.[85] Despite being philosophically of a positivist persuasion, Stendhal was concerned with the fact that realistic narratives do not actually reflect reality; what they end up reproducing are the accepted codes of realistic depiction, familiar and easy to interpret for both writer and reader. Precisely because they are so easy to absorb and interpret, the clichés ('vulgar', 'common' and 'prosaic')[86] replace the reader's own personal perception, making his moral and intellectual agenda redundant.

This, though obviously not an example of the poststructuralist awareness of reality as a linguistic construct, betrays a sophisticated concern on the part of a nineteenth-century realist writer with the ontological and epistemological nature of fiction and, moreover, its ideological implications. If the reader accepts the ready-made view of reality, there is no need for him to work out his own.

Stendhal's concern was not unique among realist novelists, and would have been shared by many in Russia. In mid-nineteenth century Russian fiction, the heroes of Goncharov, Turgenev, Dostoevskii, Chernyshevskii, Panaeva, Nadezhda Khvoshchinskaia, Evgeniia Tur, Pisemskii, Leskov and Tolstoi, were forging a moral consciousness of their own (with varying degrees of success) amid the plurality of ideologies of the age. In criticism, the question of verisimilitude and its utilitarian

[84] Jefferson, *Reading Realism in Stendhal,* p. xiii.

[85] Ibid., p. 25.

[86] Ibid.

purposes dominated aesthetic debates between journalists, philosophers and writers for over twenty years.[87]

The appropriate degree and general permissibility of a hidden ideological agenda has long been a bone of contention in the theory of realism, from Plato's concern with 'false stories'[88] to Auerbach's contempt for 'political liar[s] with a definite end in view, lying in the interest of a claim to absolute authority'.[89] And yet deep involvement in politics is one of the constant features of Russian literature, especially those periods in which realism was the dominant literary aesthetic. In the 1860s, this inherent characteristic became even more prominent, when highly politicised literary texts, actively promoted by publishers and enthusiastically received by readers, proliferated to the point of becoming mainstream. By that time, a large number of published novels had an often overt ideological agenda. Those that did not were deemed unworthy of a time demanding revolutionary change, shunned as 'pure art' and denied publication by such influential arbiters of public taste as *Sovremennik*, the leading progressive journal of the period.

This development does not look particularly surprising in the broader context of Russian literary history. The Horatian ideal of the Poet Citizen, inherited from the

[87] For a comprehensive overview, see Charles A. Moser, 'The Disputants and Their Journals', in *Esthetics as Nightmare: Russian Literary Theory, 1855-1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 3-87.

[88] 'Then shall we carelessly allow the children to hear any old stories, told by just anyone […] Then we must first of all, it seems, supervise the storytellers. We'll select their stories whenever they are fine and beautiful and reject them when they aren't'. Plato, *Republic*, trans. by G. M. A. Grube, revised by C.D.C Reeve (Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett, 1992), pp. 52-3.

[89] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 14. Wellek's way of making Auerbach's descriptive definition of realism work is through the concept of 'type', as an aesthetic category fusing subjective traits and objective observation (Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism*, p. 242). He himself takes an opposite view, claiming that even in the 'original definition, "the objective representation of contemporary social reality", didacticism is implied and concealed'..

classical tradition, was adopted by literary elites in the eighteenth century and remains in use to this day.[90] By the mid-nineteenth century, historical circumstances were actively encouraging this approach. Because of government censorship, fiction became essentially the only open forum for the discussion of important ideas and it was considered necessary to keep this forum free from the static noise of a 'pure art' preoccupied with aesthetic issues rather than problems of social governance. This efficient literary policy, which was practiced by the editorial boards of popular literary journals, ensured the dominance of the doctrine of utilitarian writing, the most influential of the several approaches to art and aesthetics preached by the key radically minded players on the literary scene of the period: Nikolai Chernyshevskii, Nikolai Dobroliubov, Dmitrii Pisarev and, later on, Maksim Antonovich.

The publication of Turgenev's *Ottsy i deti* in 1862 heralded the inclusion of fictional forms into ideological debates and consolidated groups of intellectuals at the opposing ends of the radical/conservative divide. The utilitarian impulse was so powerful that even writers at the other end of the ideological spectrum, such as Aleksei Pisemksii or the consummate aesthete Konstantin Leont'ev, saw fiction principally as a vehicle of ideas, and only secondly as a form of art. Literary works of the period were created with a heightened awareness of current aesthetic debates, themselves heavily influenced by the critics' political and ideological allegiances. Fictional narratives, especially novels, became a form of argument in a political debate, with their authors (unlike Turgenev earlier) fully intending them to be interpreted as such. Moreover, writers published critical articles and critics tried their hands at fiction, examining what they were doing and why. Previous approaches to the period of the long 1860s (1855-1872) have conceptualised the conflict of ideas

[90] See, for example, contemporary poetry: M. O. Efremov, D. L. Bykov, *Grazhdanin Poet. 31 nomer khudozhestvennoi samodeiatel'nosti. Grazhdane besy* (Moscow: KoLibri, 2012).

raging at the time in philosophical and aesthetic terms[91] and concentrated on the texts of literary criticism such as articles and reviews. However, although it is claimed that the 'struggle of ideas' in the 1860s oscillated between criticism and imaginative literature,[92] this 'struggle of ideas' remains to be examined in the context of literary self-consciousness in the novel.

The 1850s saw a gradual transition from concerns with degrees of verisimilitude to a new understanding of the role that literature was to play in society. In the twenty years of aesthetic debates that raged after Belinskii died in 1848, the idea of realism underwent a remarkable transformation from the 'poetry of reality' [поэзия реальности] to a 'feat of denunciation' [обличительный подвиг].[93] By the middle of the 1860s, the introspection of psychological prose turned towards the urgent questions of utility, morality and truth and their representation in literary texts.

The specific intellectual climate of the 1860s made Russian writers reflect on their vocation and its utilitarian purposes. For many, to be a writer meant to engage with social reality in a productive way and to engineer change through the truthful representation of social ills or the convincing description of an attractive alternative. The traditional view of nineteenth-century Russian literary politics holds it to be very polarised: Slavophiles vs. Westernisers, Moscow traditionalists vs. St. Petersburg innovators, utilitarians vs. proponents of pure art, etc. What lends this picture more sophistication is an understanding that the conflicting sides were united in their

[91] For a fundamental study, bringing in a variety of primary sources, see B. F. Egorov, *Izbrannoe, Esteticheskie idei v Rossii XIX veka* (St. Petersburg: Letnii sad, 2009); as well as Charles A. Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmare*.

[92] Moser, ibid., p. 32.

[93] D. I. Pisarev, 'Realisty' in *Literaturnaya kritika,* 3 vols (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1981), II, pp. 6-54 (p. 10).

opposition to the ideological stronghold of the Imperial Russian state. This tension between two opposing sides resulted in creative outputs of varying literary quality and political impact. The polemics that began as articles and literary reviews then progressed towards larger literary forms, with the most popular pieces playing a role not only in literary but also in social life, functioning as mass communication media.[94]

The practice became so widespread that, in addition to the major literary figures of the era (such as Nikolai Chernyshevskii, on one side of the debate, and Sergei Aksakov, on the other), comparatively minor writers began to contribute to the discussion, capitalising on the trend. Charles A. Moser's contention that the radicals dominated the sphere of literary criticism and the conservatives the sphere of literary works[95] holds true only if we continue to employ the traditional binary approach. For every committed revolutionary of the left and unyielding conservative of the right, there were a number of opportunists in between. Their wavering positions might have been due to a genuine changes of views or to the need to make a living by publishing a number of articles in different journals.

Certain writers enjoyed a level of popularity and recognition that would have been difficult to achieve at a time of a different literary fashion (Fedor Reshetnikov, whose novella *Podlipovtsy* [1864] was published by Nekrasov because of the contemporary trend for gritty ethno-realism, is a good example). Others relied on a

[94] Umberto Eco, for example, calls the 'popular novel' 'one of the most spectacular examples [...] of the mass communication media'. See Umberto Eco, *The Role of The Reader: Explorations in The Semiotics of Text* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 141. According to Moser, the shift of the polemic from the pages of journals 'into the pages of creative literature' occurred around 1860-1861 (Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmar*e, p. 32).

[95] 'Literary criticism of the 1860s was chiefly in the hands of radicals, and creative writing under the control of conservatives'. Moser, ibid., p. xv.

fine understanding of the literary craft in order to carry them through: 'Я, хоть и плохой писатель, а все-таки несколько получше понимаю условия художественности',[96] claimed Chernyshevskii in the preface to *Chto delat'?* (1863). Chernyshevskii's irony aside, the literary scene in the 1860s was teeming with people of little or no literary training, trying their hand as writers and journalists, sometimes out of conviction and often as a response to a growing demand. Some of them would go on to make a substantial contribution to contemporary literature and theatre.

The synchronised momentum of thrusting out novelistic 'arguments' from all sides of the ideological debate was exemplified in the almost simultaneous publication of three novels in 1862-1863: Nikolai Chernyshevskii's *Chto delat'?*, Aleksei Pisemskii's *Vzbalamuchennoe more* and Avdot'ia Panaeva's *Zhenskaia dolia*.

Nikolai Chernyshevskii, an influential critic responsible for the formation of the new radical editorial board of *Sovremennik* in the late 1850s, wrote his novel in four months, while imprisoned in the Peter and Paul fortress. Because of the conditions of Chernyshevskii's imprisonment, *Chto delat'?* did not go through the usual drafting process and was published without revision in *Sovremennik* in 1863, issues 3 to 5.

In 1863, Aleksei Pisemskii held views that were diametrically opposed to Chernyshevskii's. Despite Pisemskii's generally conservative leanings, the writer's political allegiances alternated throughout his life. At the time when *Vzbalamuchennoe more* was published, Pisemskii's disgust for the radical aesthetics

[96] N. G. Chernyshevskii, *Chto Delat'?,* ed. by T. I. Ornatskaia and S. A. Reiser (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975), p. 229.

matched Chernyshevskii's fondness for it and both writers were prepared to go to great literary lengths to make their respective positions clear and easy to digest for their readers. *Vzbalamuchennoe more* was written after Pisemskii's return from a short visit to Europe (which he found alien and overrated[97] – impressions that further exacerbated his usual vitriolic style) and published in *Russkii vestnik* also in 1863, issues 3 to 8.

Avdot'ia Panaeva's *Zhenskaia dolia*, was published a year before *Chto delat'?* and *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, in 1862. A hostess of the *Sovremennik*'s literary salon and Nikolai Nekrasov's co-author, Panaeva was a successful writer in her own right who had by 1862 already published more than ten popular short novels. Like the rest of Panaeva's fiction, *Zhenskaia dolia* offered a contribution to the debate on 'the woman question', i.e. 'a public discussion of social and economic changes in women's lives'.[98] Serialised in three parts, it appeared in *Sovremennik* in March, April and May 1862, issues 3 to 5 (1862).

Despite the fact that academic studies of Chernyshevskii's oeuvre vastly outnumber those on Pisemskii and Panaeva, it is remarkable that the critical literature on all the three writers mention meta-literariness as one of the most important problems raised by studying their work.[99]

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[97] Charles A. Moser, *Pisemsky: A Provincial Realist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 120.

[98] Jane Costlow, 'Love, Work, and the Woman Question in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing', in *Women Writers in Russian Literature*, ed. by Toby W. Clyman and Diana Greene (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 66-76, p. 61. For comprehensive bibliography on the subject of the woman question see also ibid., pp. 72-3.

[99] On Chernyshevskii, see: Irina Paperno, *Semiotika povedeniia: N. G. Chernyshevskii: Chelovek epokhi realizma* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1996), pp. 23, 25; see also U. A. Gural'nik's survey of the definitions of genre in critical literature on Chernyshevskii in *Nasledie N. G. Chernyshevskogo-pisatelia i sovetskoe literaturovedenie* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980), pp. 143-4. On

Utilising a mix of gothic, melodramatic and sensationalist narrative modes, *Chto delat'?* combined Chernyshevskii's latest insights into aesthetic theory with the by then already old-fashioned reader-oriented poetics. The text aspired to present a 'dictionary of contemporary life',[100] looking back to the self-conscious Enlightenment narratives of Diderot and the Encyclopaedists. In *Chto delat'?*, an authoritative and often patronising narrator discussed the structure of the novel and voiced his doubts about his readers' predilection for happy endings and 'unnecessary melodrama'. Through the story of Vera Pavlovna's ideological awakening, related by a highly self-conscious narrator, Chernyshevskii aimed to encourage his readers to question their ideological assumptions and contemplate the ontology of fiction and the relationship of art and reality.

Pisemksii's novelistic works have not been critically approached with the same vigour. However, even within the small number of articles dedicated to the subject, he is seen as a highly metaliterary author.[101] Despite the fact that Pisemskii's works

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Pisemskii: Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmare*, p. 143; K. Iu. Zubkov, 'K voprosu o zhanrovoi spetsifike romana A. F. Pisemskogo "Vzbalamuchennoe more": Pisemskii i Gogol'', *Rossica Petropolitana Juniora*, <http://mir.spbu.ru/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=768:rpj-04> [accessed on 1 August 2016]. On Panaeva and metafiction in Russian women's writing, see: Jane Costlow, 'Love, Work, and the Woman Question in Mid-Nineteenth Century Women's Writing', pp. 66-76; Joe Andrew, 'Telling Tales: Zhukova as Metaliterary Author', in *Vieldeutiges Nicht-Zu-Ende-Sprechen: Thesen und Momentaufnahmen aus der Geschichte russischer Dichterinnen*, ed. by Arja Rosenholm and Frank Göpfert (Fichtenwalde: Göpfert, 2002), pp. 113-29.

[100] In a letter to his wife of 1862, Chernyshevskii wrote that he was planning to write a multi-volume *Critical Dictionary of Ideas and Facts* [Критический словарь идей и фактов]. N. G. Chernyshevskii, 'Letter to O. S. Chernyshevskaia from 5 October 1862', in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [henceforth *PSS*], 15 vols (Moscow, 1939-1953), XIV: *Pis'ma 1838-1876 godov* (1949), p. 456.

[101] See, for example, I. V. Aleksandrova, 'A. S. Pushkin v tvorcheskom soznanii A. F. Pisemskogo', *II Krymskie pushkinskie chteniia: g. Kerch', 22–26 sentiabria 1992 g.: Materialy* (Simferopol': Krymskii komitet po pechati, 1993), pp. 81–83; V. L. Beglov, 'Poisk "geroia vremeni" v romane A. F. Pisemskogo "Tysiacha dush"' in *Iz-za cherty*, ed. by I. E. Karpukhina (Sterlitamak: Sterlitamakskii gos. ped. in-t, 1999), pp. 38–52; I. P. Viduetskaia, 'A. F. Pisemskii' in *'Natural'naia shkola' i ee rol'*

were frequently considered, unproblematically, as second-rate examples of realist fiction typical of the later stages of the naturalist school, the metafictional elements in his novels are clearly noticeable. Alongside the main character Baklanov, *Vzbalamuchennoe more* features an omniscient narrator, who, halfway through the novel, suddenly turns out to be a real-life writer, Aleksei Pisemskii. The Pisemskii narrator/character then proceeds to expound his views on contemporary literature and to read the novella *Starcheskii grekh* (actually published by Pisemskii in 1860) to Baklanov and his lover. The first-person narrator thus engages with the characters of the novel despite having claimed elsewhere that they are 'лица […] совершенно вымышленные',[102] creating an ontologically confusing metafictional web of relations, not unlike the much later example of the narrator entering his own narrative in a classic example of postmodern metafiction, John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969).[103]

Avdot'ia Panaeva's novels were aimed at a general reader, and, as Dmitrii Pisarev commented, were even perceived to compromise the lofty ideals of the

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v stanovlenii russkogo realizma, ed. by I. P. Viduetskaia (Moscow: Nasledie, 1997), pp. 189–209; N. V. Volodina, 'Literaturnye realii v romane A. F. Pisemskogo "Tysiacha dush"', *Vestnik Cheliabinskogo un-ta. Seriia 2. Filologiia*, 1 (1996), 34–45; N. A. Gus'kov, 'Podtekst v romane A. F. Pisemskogo "Tysiacha dush"', in *Homo universitatis: Pamiati Askol'da Borisovicha Muratova (1937–2005)*, ed. by A. A. Karpov (St. Petersburg: Fakul'tet filologii i iskusstv SPbGU, 2009), pp. 43–56; E. N. Kruglova, 'Problema obraza avtora v tvorchestve A. F. Pisemskogo', *Vestnik Kostromskogo gos-vennogo universiteta im. N. A. Nekrasova*, 4 (2006), 130–5; L. L. Smirnova, 'Pushkin v proze A. F. Pisemskogo', *Russkaia literatura*, 2 (1999), 189–97; Iu. Iu. Frolova, 'Roman A. F. Pisemskogo "Tysiacha dush" i literaturnaia traditsiia' in *Eikhenbaumovskie chteniia-6: materialy iubileinoi nauchnoi konferentsii* (Voronezh: VGPU, 2007), pp. 60–66.

[102] A. F. Pisemskii, *Polnoe sobranoe sochinenii*, 8 vols (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo tovarishchestva A. F. Marks, 1910-1911), IV: *Starcheskii grekh. Bat'ka. Vzbalamuchennoe more. Russkie lguny. Ocherki* (1910) [henceforth *Vzbalamuchennoe more*], pp. 304-5.

[103] John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), p. 387.

radical movement by oversimplifying them.[104] *Zhenskaia dolia* presented a typical enough narrative of escape from oppressive family circumstances through marriage,[105] and yet it contained overt meta-narrative elements. Although different from sophisticated philosophical queries of the kind found in *Chto delat'?* or the metaleptic narrator/character confusion of *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, Panaeva's constant asides to 'the reader' and reflections on the nature of literary fiction demonstrated the popularity and spread of self-conscious literary techniques, varying from experimental to cliché.

I argue that, in the 1860s, metafictional narratives and instances of self-conscious narration became common in the works of writers belonging to different ideological camps, from radical to conservative. The oversaturation of the public sphere with ideology led to a surge of metafictional practices in contemporary literature. This trend, as I have demonstrated above, was noted in passing but never explored in depth because of the widespread assumptions about the nature of Russian realism, the dominant literary aesthetic at the time. I suggest that this development should be considered typical rather than out of the ordinary, especially in the context of the inherently self-conscious Russian novelistic tradition.

The intellectual climate of the 1860s, a decade in which literature and criticism fused with politics, produced metafiction almost by necessity. Aside from the three novels examined here, instances of metafictional narration can be found in the works

[104] '… этот писатель (Н. Станицкий) постоянно работает в "Современнике", и постоянно уродует своим фразерством светлые и широкие идеи, которые развивали в этом журнале действительно мыслящие и деятельные люди". D. I. Pisarev, 'Kukol'naia tragediia s buketom grazhdanskoi skorbi', in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 6 vols (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo F. Pavlenkova, 1894-1907), IV (1894), pp. 147-96 (p. 148), first published in *Russkoe slovo*, 8 (1864), 1-58.

[105] For more on narratives of escape, see Catriona Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing, 1820-1992* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 59-79.

of other less well-known novelists of the period who have since fallen off the critical radar almost completely. Writers such as Konstantin Leontiev, Viktor Askochenskii, Vasilii Avenarius and others, offered their views on topical issues, publishing 'statements in their own defense in which they were almost obliged to deal with fundamental esthetic questions'.[106] While discussing the problematic aesthetic aspects of imaginative literature, they also reflected on the ontology of fiction and the epistemology of political thought. This thesis aims to prove that these concerns, usually considered typical for much later eras, were, in fact, deeply entrenched in the intellectual culture of the period.

The remainder of the thesis is divided into three chapters. In each chapter, I explore a single novel as a separate case study, with the first chapter dedicated to Chernyshevskii's *Chto delat'?*, the second to Pisemskii's *Vzbalamuchennoe more* and the third to Panaeva's *Zhenskaia dolia*. Each chapter, while illustrating my general argument about the persistence of metafictional narrative strategies in Russian literature of the 1860s, offers a detailed examination of each novel's critical and academic reception, contextualises their publication in the literary and social history of the period, and, finally, offers close readings of the novels' metafictional passages.

The disparity in the availability of the primary and secondary sources relating to the three authors had determined the amount of historical contextualisation contained in the chapters themselves. In the case of Chernyshevskii, the research undertaken by Soviet scholars has amassed invaluable and very detailed

[106] Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmare*, p. 32.

information.[107] By contrast, no such scrutiny has been bestowed on minutiae of Pisemskii's life.

Soviet literary studies never held Pisemskii in the same high esteem as Chernyshevskii, mostly because of the former's dubious ideological credentials. Even though some sympathy to radical causes can be found in Pisemskii's earlier works, by the time he had matured as a novelist his political views had become more conservative, which made it difficult for Soviet scholars to champion him as a relevant object of study. Just cataloguing secondary literature on Chernyshevskii became a separate discipline in the 1970-80s,[108] but the number of scholars working on Pisemskii has always been comparatively modest.

After a brief surge of interest in Panaeva in the 1920s, only recently there have appeared studies of the actual circumstances of her work as *Sovremennik*'s editorial assistant. As a result, the chapters on Pisemskii and Panaeva reconstruct the historical circumstances of their novels' publication in detail, whereas the chapter on Chernyshevskii only refers to the substantial body of research that had been done on this subject. The same reasoning lies behind the order of the case studies' presentation: aside from charting the use of various types of metanarrative, the

[107] To give just one example, at least three scholars have separately established why Chernyshevskii's handwriting in the manuscript of *Chto delat'?* is less eligible than in his articles: while in prison, he had to switch from his usual iron quills to goose feathers because the prisoners in Peter and Paul Fortress where not allowed to keep any metal. S. A. Reiser, 'Nekotorye problemy izucheniia romana "Chto delat'?"', in *Chto delat'?* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975), pp. 782-834 (p. 791); I. Borisov, 'Alekseevskii ravelin v 1862-65 gg. (Iz moikh vospominanii)', *Russkaia starina*, 12 (1901), 573-78 (p. 576); M. K. Lemke, *Politicheskie protsessy M. I. Mikhailova, D. I. Pisareva i N. G. Chernyshevskago: po neizdannym dokumentam* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo O. N. Popovoi, 1907), p. 363.

[108] For a good example of a Chernyshevsii scholar researching only secondary literature on the subject, see the abovementioned U. A. Gural'nik, *Nasledie N.G. Chernyshevskogo-pisatelia i sovetskoe literaturovedenie: itogi, zadachi, perspektivy izucheniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980).

progress of the chapters also reflects the hierarchy of the three writers and their works in the current academic canon.

Since one of the aims of this thesis is to challenge the critical assumption of the predominantly mimetic nature of mid-nineteenth century Russian literary realism, my analysis of the three novels necessarily involves an examination of their place in the contemporary literary and academic canon. Hence, all the three chapters include short overviews of the critical literature's reaction specifically to the novels' overt use of metanarrative in order to determine whether this reaction had any influence on the novels' subsequent position in the canon. Because of the abovementioned disparity, I explore this issue in greater detail in chapters 2 and 3. Since the reevaluation of Chernyshevskii's work has been a point of interest for various scholars for quite some time now, chapter 1 addresses this problem only in passing.

Even though each chapter explores a separate case study, all three aim to situate Chernyshevskii's, Pisemskii's and Panaeva's work in the wider context of European (English, German and French) literature as well as of the mid-nineteenth century debate on realism and the aesthetics of the novel. Throughout the thesis, I refer to Russian and European authors who had an acknowledged influence on the three writers, primarily Nikolai Gogol' and George Sand. Another overarching approach uniting all the three chapters is the use of narratological analysis as the main method of close reading.

The lowest bar for considering a literary text metafictional is the presence in the text of narrative self-reflection, i.e. an articulated awareness of the ontological difference between the events narrated in the text and the reality in which the reader empirically finds herself. This awareness is often expressed through directly initiated communication with 'the reader' as the narrator's rhetorical addressee and a

'receiver' of the text's overall message as described in Jacobson's model of literary communication.[109]

In its most obvious instance, the meta-nature of the literary text becomes apparent in the act of narrative metalepsis, when one or more rhetorical entities of the text cross ontological levels within it. In narratology, metalepsis is 'any intrusion by an extradiegetic narrator or narattee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.)'.[110] The rhetoric of this process has been examined by two generations of narratologists from Gérard Genette to Mieke Bal,[111] its complex epistemological nature had been most aptly addressed in Michael Riffaterre's *Fictional Truth* (1989), whereas its political dimension had been explored in Terry Lovell's *Pictures of Reality: Aesthetics, Politics and Pleasure* (1980).

In between those extremes, there exist a number of less obvious self-conscious narrative strategies (or, to use Gerald Pierce's term 'metanarrative signs')[9] that, if employed consistently, reinforce the reader's engagement with a literary text and shape its reception in singular, specific ways. A failure to acknowledge the particular effect the use of these techniques has on the text's reception, functioning, afterlife and reputation distorts our understanding of its history and promotes

[109] According to Jacobson's model, the biographical author in this model is a 'sender', and the literary text (novel) is a channel. Whether metanarrative could be considered a 'code' or a 'function' in this model is a question of some contention between theorists of metafiction. For more on the application of Jacobson's model of communication and Bakhtin's idea of 'metalinguistics' as mentioned in the *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (1963), see Finke, *Metapoesis*, pp. 5-18; Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, p. 44; Todd, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative*, pp. 47-9; Gerald Prince, 'Metanarattive Signs', in *Metafiction*, ed. by Mark Currie, pp. 55-71, pp. 55-58; Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 37.

[110] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, pp. 234-35.

[111] Ibid., pp. 231-7; Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 58-60

misinterpretations. Aiming to compensate for this omission in the previous scholarship, my narratological analysis of the three novels focusses on their explicitly metafictional passages. I single out instances of major and minor narrative metalepses, including not only overt but also implicit ontological frame-breaks like the conventional asides addressed to the implied reader.

In terms of categorizing the rhetorical entities of the text such as 'author', 'reader' and 'narrator', I am relying on the contemporary version of Wayne Booth's and Wolfgang Iser's typologies of the 'implied reader' and the 'implied author' as revised by Gerald Prince, Wolf Schmid and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan.[112] Most importantly, I follow contemporary scholars in distinguishing between the 'implied' reader, the 'ideal reader' and 'narrattee'.

The 'implied reader', or 'intended reader' 'is not fixed in the text but exists merely in the imagination of the author and who can be reconstructed only with the latter's statements or extra-textual information, does not form a part of the work. Such a reader belongs exclusively to the sphere of the real author, in whose imagination he or she exists'.[113] The 'ideal' or 'model reader' is an implied reader who is ideally suited to receiving the author's message and interpreting it correctly. Both implied and model readers exist on the same ontological level as the biographical author.

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[112] Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983); Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987); Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); Wolf Schmid, 'Implied Author', in *The Living Handbook of Narratology* < hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php?title=Implied_Author&oldid=2068> [accessed 13 August 2016]; Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Berlin, New York: Mouton, 1982).

[113] Schmid, 'Implied Author', ibid.

Narrattee, on the other hand, 'is the agent addressed by the narrator', and 'is, by definition, situated the same narrative level as the narrator'.[114] This distinction allows me to conceptualise and analyse the constitutive difference between, for example, Chernyshevskii's implied readers (the censors), model readers (the subscribers of *Sovremennik*) and narrattees ('the perspicacious reader', 'the good public', 'the female reader') or Panaeva's implied readers (again, *Sovremennik*'s audience), ideal readers (the proponents of women's rights, aware of her identity as a woman) and narrattees ('the poor women, 'the young men', etc).

Similarly, in all the three close readings, I distinguish between 'biographical authors' of the texts (the actual historical figures Nikolai Chernyshevskii, Aleksei Pisemskii and Avdot'ia Panaeva), the 'implied authors' and the narrators of the three novels. The narrators share their creators' biographies to varying degrees: Chernyshevskii's narrator is an unnamed amalgam of his past (published), current (incarcerated) and future (liberated) selves, whereas the narrator in *Vzbalamuchennoe more* is explicitly referred to as 'Pisemskii the realist writer' [Писемский, писатель-реалист].[115] Avdot'ia Panaeva's relation to her explicitly male narrator is the most complex of the three, and implies a challenge of the prescriptive contemporary discourses of femininity. In order to analyse this challenge from the point of view of narratology, I rely on the concept of 'narrative transvestism' developed by Madeleine Kahn.[116]

Despite being closely realted to to their real-life counterparts, the 'implied authors' of the three texts are nonetheless ontologically distinct. As a stable,

[114] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction,* p. 104.

[115] Pisemskii, *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, p. 434.

[116] Madeleine Kahn, *Narrative Transvestism: Rhetoric and Gender in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

consistent entity the implied author of the text is a construct inferred and assembled by the reader.[117] The gap between the reality of the author's situation and the reader's perception of it is particularly obvious in the example of Chernyshevskii and Panaeva. Whereas it has been established that the real-life author of *Chto delat'?* had no actual connection to any underground revolutionary movements,[118] the implied author of the novel is presented as someone whose help is vital for the young revolutionaries like Rakhmetov.[119] In case of Avdot'ia Panaeva, the implied author of her novel is a male writer Nikolai Stanitskii, her carefully constructed male-writer persona that she has maintained since her first publications in the early 1850s.

Finally, I use the idea of narrative levels to describe the changing positions of the narrator in each of the three texts, as well as to define their role in the functioning of narrative metalepses. For the purposes of my analysis, I adopt Genette's definition of 'narrative metalepsis' (noted above) as 'the transition from one narrative level to another'.[120] The 'extradiegetic' narrator occupies the highest (diegetic) level of narrative and does not take part in any of the narrated events. An 'intradiegetic' narrator occupies the next level in the hierarchy (hypodiegetic level) and naturally features in the overall story. The narrator who oscillates between different levels of the narrative is defined as 'metadiegetic'. The extent to which extra-, intra- and metadiegetic 'narrators are absent or present in the story they narrate'[121] also varies. The 'heterodiegetic' narrator does not participate in the story, whereas the

[117] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction,* p. 87.

[118] A. A. Demchenko and E. I. Pokusaev, *N. G. Chernyshevskii: nauchnaia biografiia* (Saratov: Izdatel'stvo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1992), pp. 223-250.

[119] Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?,* p. 208.

[120] Genette, *Narrative Discourse,* p. 234

[121] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction,* p. 95.

'homodiegetic' narrator can turn into a character of his own story.[122] These characteristics of Chernyshevskii's, Pisemskii's and Panaeva's narrators are discussed in detail, as is the degree of their narrators' perceptibility and reliability.

The first chapter, 'Radical Metafiction: Nikolai Chernyshevskii's *Chto delat'?*', establishes the connection between Chernyshevskii's views on the ontology of literary fiction and the use of metanarrative in his novel. I borrow the term 'radical' [радикальный] from the 1860s literary critics themselves,[123] to describe not just Chernyshevskii's approach to literary aesthetics but also his treatment of contemporary conventions of literary realism in his own writing. In this chapter, I briefly address the well-studied circumstances of the novel's publication and examine the history of Chernyshevskii's previous engagement with literary fiction as a critic. Arguing from the premise that the radical critics intended to challenge the boundaries between art and reality, I suggest that *Chto delat'?* was conceived as an attempt to transgress the ontological divide between reality and its representation in art. In the close reading of the novel's metafictional passages, I offer a new interpretation of its introductory chapters and a detailed analysis of the text's multiple metalepses.

The second chapter, 'Conservative Metafiction: Aleksei Pisemskii's *Vzbalamuchennoe more*', examines Pisemskii's novel in the context of his changing political allegiances and views on the aesthetics of realism. Analysing the novel's reception by his contemporaries, I discuss the major role Pisemskii played on the literary scene of the 1860s and his subsequent position in the Russian literary canon.

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[122] My summary of the typology of narrator's is based on the classification use by both Genette (*Narrative Discourse,* pp. 212-37) and Rimmon-Kenan (*Narrative Fiction,* pp. 87-106)

[123] For more on the genesis of the term, see Egorov, *Izbrannoe. Esteticheskie idei v Rossii XIX veka*, pp. 297-306, or Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmare*, pp. 4-87.

I use Pisemskii's letters, reviews and articles to reconstruct his theory of realism and argue that the appearance of metanarrative in *Vzbalamuchennoe more* is the result of Pisemskii's major aesthetic dilemma – his inability to reconcile the use of 'objective narration' with the didactic impulse in fiction. Finally, in the close reading of *Vzbalamuchennoe more* as metafiction, I focus on the novel's metadiegetic narrator, major and minor metalepses, and the ontologically confusing representation of the ideal reader as a character.

The third chapter, 'Feminist Metafiction: Avdot'ia Panaeva's *Zhenskaia dolia*' expounds the implications of the connection between the intellectual climate of the 1860s and the proliferation of metafictional narratives for Panaeva's novel. I discuss the novel's plot, imagery and style in the context of the 1860s Russian debates on the woman's question and of contemporary European feminist metafiction, and suggest that Panaeva's recourse to metanarrative had been inspired both by her novel's subject matter and her own experiences as a woman writer. Noting Panaeva's reliance on the formulaic structure of the French feminine social novel, in my close reading of *Zhenskaia dolia* I demonstrate the transformation of the self-conscious literary techniques from experimental into cliché. Finally, examining Panaeva's narrator's interaction with his multiple narrattees, I describe and define the specifics of the novel's transgressive narrative voice.

The second and third chapters address problems that, to my knowledge, have only been posed in passing in relation to Pisemskii's and Panaeva's work, and have never been seriously considered before. The first chapter on *Chto delat'?* deals with the one of the most thoroughly analysed texts in the Russian literary history, but offers new, original interpretation of some of its aspects.

Taken together, the chapters showcase various uses of the same narrative strategy – metanarrative – in the three representative literary texts of the period. Moreover, since the case studies offered in the three chapters include novels by writers from across the ideological spectrum, the work as a whole establishes the persistence of metafictional narrative strategies throughout the expanse of the mid-1860s literary scene.

The questions of the relationship between the ideal and the real in literary verisimilitude occupied the most brilliant – and some not quite so brilliant – minds of the era. In the context of an examination of narrative self-consciousness, these can be seen as larger philosophical enquiries into the ontology of fiction. The uneasy task of negotiating the degree of truthfulness of a realistic representation such that its ideological message is not compromised remained the subject of a decade-long debate, still reverberating in Pisemskii's outcry of 1872: '…а между тем роман, видимо, все более и более становится художественной статистикой времени и ближайшим помощником истории - критики же полоумные наши наперерыв кричат романистам: "не смейте говорить правды, а лгите и лгите, чтобы не повредить нашим высоко-избранным направлениям".'[124]

The obsession of contemporary fiction with ideological self-awareness facilitated further enquiries into the epistemology of ideological beliefs. Narrators in novels with an ideological agenda kept drawing attention to the artificiality and the constructed, manipulative nature of their texts, thereby prompting their readers to question the larger political narratives that they were expected to perceive as natural and take for granted. If the suspension of disbelief and complete subjugation of the

[124] A. F. Pisemskii, 'Letter to N. S. Leskov from 12 April 1872', in *Pis'ma*, ed. by M. K. Kleman and A. P. Mogilianskii (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1936), p. 245. (Translated by Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmare*, p. 185).

reading public could not be sustained in fiction, neither should it be expected to prevail in political life. This intention would permeate both the form and the content of published works, and produce the peculiar fusion of ideological *Bildungsroman* and political *Künstlerroman* (with Chernyshevskii's *Chto delat'?* and *Prolog*, Pisemskii's *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, *V vodovorote* and *Liudi sorokovykh godov,* and Panaeva's novel being obvious examples) as a logical consequence of the specific intellectual atmosphere of the period.

On the one hand, as David Shepherd noted, 'little, if anything, is to be gained by supplementing the bibliographies of Waugh, Hutcheon, and others with Russian and Soviet titles simply to prove that in this, as in other areas, Russian and Soviet literature, despite its many historical handicaps, has not fallen too far behind global trends'.[125] On the other, the inherent self-consciousness of the Russian novelistic tradition remains largely unexamined. This, in turn, leads to a misinterpretation of the texts that comprise it, compounded by the application of a traditional analytical framework suitable only for straightforwardly mimetic texts – an essential consideration and, ultimately, a reason for the use of the analytic apparatus developed by the theory of metafiction.

[125] Shepherd, *Beyond Metafiction*, pp. 9-10.

Chapter One

Radical Metafiction: Nikolai Chernyshevskii's *Chto delat'?*

1. Introduction

When Nikolai Chernyshevskii was arrested on 7 July 1862, it seemed that his participation in the public life had come to an end. He was imprisoned on charges of sedition, treated as a dangerous political criminal and isolated from the outside world. Chernyshevskii was not even permitted to write until October 1862, when, having repeatedly petitioned the authorities to allow him to work on commercial translations to support his family, he was finally given enough ink and paper.[1] And yet on 9 February 1863, no less than six months after its editor's arrest, the cover of *Sovremennik* announced:

> Для 'Современника', между прочим, имеются: 'Что делать?', роман Н. Г. Чернышевского (начнется печатанием со следующей книжки).[2]

Chernyshevskii wrote *Chto delat'?,* his first and most successful novel, during his imprisonment in the Peter and Paul Fortress. Despite his relative inexperience as a writer of fiction,[3] Chernyshevskii chose to express the novel's didactic message through a series of complex metafictional narrative strategies. As Gary Saul Morson has noted, *Chto delat'?* 'consists of constant alternation of narrative and metanarrative' so prominent that it 'often resembles a sort of socialist Sterne, a

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[1] A. A. Demchenko and E. I. Pokusaev, *N. G. Chernyshevskii: nauchnaia biografiia* (Saratov: Izdatel'stvo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1992), pp. 207-209.

[2] See Fig. 1. *Sovremennik*, 1-2 (1862), cover.

[3] Aside from *Chto delat'?*, by 1863 Chernyshevskii had produced just two pieces of literary fiction, both unfinished: *Teoriia i praktika* (1848) and *Poniman'e (Ne sudite)* (1848).

didactic Don Quixote'.[4] The use of these techniques, deeply rooted in the literary culture of the period, allowed Chernyshevskii to present a sophisticated argument on politics and aesthetics that would remain his most significant literary achievement.

An archpriest's son from Saratov, a small but wealthy merchant town in the south of Russia, Chernyshevskii (1828-1889) established a successful career in St. Petersburg in the 1860s. He took his university degree in philosophy in 1851 and three years later settled in the capital. Even though his initial plan for an academic career fell through (Chernyshevskii's master's thesis *Esteticheskie otnosheniia iskusstva k deistvitel'nosti* (1853) was so controversial that it took the university authorities three years to process it),[5] he found other employment. He worked first as a teacher, then as a journalist and finally as an editor and literary critic at *Sovremennik*, one of the leading 'thick'[6] journals of mid-nineteenth-century Russia.

Sovremennik, founded by Aleksandr Pushkin in 1836, through the years had been edited by a succession of literati, from P. A. Viazemskii, A. A. Kraevskii and V. F. Odoevskii to P. A. Pletnev. Finally, Pletnev sold the journal to Ivan Panaev and

[4] Gary Saul Morson, *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 99.

[5] For more on the reception of the thesis, see Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 159-66.

[6] The phenomenon of the Russian 'thick journals' is broadly covered in *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, ed. by Deborah A. Martinsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For the information on the particular journals, published in the 1860s, see one of the articles from the same collection by Robert L. Belknap, 'Survey of Russian Journals, 1840—80', in ibid., pp. 91-117, as well as V. A. Alekseev, *Istoriia russkoi zhurnalistiki*, *1860-1880* (Leningrad: Leningradskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1963); B. L. Koz'min, *Zhurnalistika 6o-kh godov XIX veka* (Moscow: Vysshaia partiinaia shkola, 1948). For more specifically on *Sovremennik*, see V. E. Evgen'ev-Maksimov, *'Sovremennik' v 40-50 gg.: ot Belinskogo do Chernyshevskogo* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo pisatelia, 1934), V. E. Evgen'ev-Maksimov, *'Sovremennik' pri Chernyshevskom i Dobroliubove* (Leningrad: GIKHL, 1936), V. E. Evgen'ev-Maksimov, *Poslednie gody "Sovremennika": 1863-1866* (Leningrad: GIKHL, 1939).

Nikolai Nekrasov in 1846. By that time, the journal was struggling with just 223 subscribers and a print run of 300-400 copies (by comparison, its closest rival *Otechestvennye zapiski* circulated 5000 copies in the same year). Recruited as part of Nekrasov's strategy for the journal's revival, Chernyshevskii joined *Sovremennik* in 1853 and oversaw its literary policy for more than a decade.

From 14 December 1862 to 4 April 1863, Chernyshevskii worked on *Chto delat'?* in his cell. He composed a single draft of the text that would be only marginally revised before publication. Limited availability of paper and ink, as well as the looming threat of a complete ban on writing, made any editing almost impossible. All of Chernyshevskii's correspondence passed through the Investigating Committee that was in charge of pursuing his court case. On 15 January 1863, having finished the first two chapters of the novel, Chernyshevskii passed them on to the Committee along with a letter to his wife. The manuscript was deemed harmless, and by 4 February it was already with Nekrasov in *Sovremennik*.[7] Encouraged by the ease with which the chapters passed the first round of censors, Nekrasov then advertised the novel on the cover of *Sovremennik*'s January-February issue. (Fig. 1).

By 1863, much of the journal's success rested on the texts produced or commissioned personally by Chernyshevskii. After his arrest, the journal's remaining editors struggled to appoint an editorial board that would keep *Sovremennik* going in the same fashion. The timing was also auspicious: since June 1862 *Sovremennik*, often in trouble with the censors, had been out of circulation for eight months by the order of the Censors Committee. Much of the Committee's good will rested on the

[7] As A. Ia. Panaeva recalled in her memoirs, Nekrasov accidentally lost the first part of the manuscript on his way home from visiting Chernyshevskii. Thanks to a kindly passerby who brought it to *Sovremennik*'s office to claim the promised reward, the manuscript was recovered the next day. Such was Nekrasov's relief that he had given the man more money that initially advertised. A. Ia. Panaeva, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow: GIKHL, 1956), pp. 324-7.

editors' personal relationship with the censors that ensured timely payments of appropriate bribes.[8] Panaev's death in 1862 and Chernyshevskii's arrest soon after have left Nekrasov to negotiate with the committee on his own. And so the first issue of the journal, published after an eight-month break, had to reassure the readers that despite his arrest, Chernyshevskii was still contributing to *Sovremennik*, even if in a different capacity. Announcing the journal's latest prestigious acquisition, Nekrasov publically reinstated Chernyshevskii connection to *Sovremennik* and proved that it had not been diminished by his new status of a political inmate.

Chernyshevskii's arrest followed an incriminating campaign, orchestrated by the government. The writer was accused of composing an inflammatory proclamation and apprehended on the evidence of a report submitted to the police by one of his close acquaintances, Vsevolod Kostomarov.[9] In the atmosphere of general

[8] *Sovremennik*'s relationship with the government was a web of personal connections: Ivan Panaev's uncle V. I. Panaev held one of the highest posts at court as a director of chancery for the ministry of the court [директор канцелярии министерства двора]. The censor A. V. Nikitenko, a member of the Committee for Book Publishing [Комитет по делам книгопечатания] since 1859, had started his career as *Sovremennik*'s first editor in 1847. For more on this complicated relationship, see Iu. V. Nikulichev, 'Bog, mamona i obyknovennye novye liudi: ot "Kto vinovat?" k "Chto delat'?"', *Voprosy literatury*, 2 (2014), 142-175. On Nekrasov's relationship with *Sovremennik'*s censor V. N. Beketov see *Ibid.*, p. 182

[9] On Vsevolod Kostomarov's involvement with Chernyshevskii over the years 1861-1863, see Demchenko, Pokusaev, *N. G. Chernyshevskii: nauchnaia biografiia*, pp. 223-225. Kostomarov's claim that Chernyshevskii was the author of the subversive proclamation *Barskim krest'ianam ot ikh dobrozhelatelei poklon* has since been contested and is believed to have been fabricated. However, the question of the proclamation's authorship remains open. A. A. Demchenko, who believed that Chernyshevskii had no connection to the proclamation, wrote about his debate on the subject with an archive scholar M. I. Perper in A. A. Demchenko, 'Pamiati M. I. Perper', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 53 (2002), 258-60.

СОВРЕМЕННИКЪ

1863

№№ I и II (ЯНВАРЬ и ФЕВРАЛЬ)

ДЛЯ СОВРЕМЕННИКА, МЕЖДУ ПРОЧИМЪ, ИМѢЮТСЯ:

ЧТО ДѢЛАТЬ? романъ Н. Г. Чернышевскаго. (Начнется печатаніемъ съ слѣдующей книжки).

БРАТЪ и СЕСТРА, романъ Н. Г. Помяловскаго.

ТИХОЕ ПРИСТАНИЩЕ, романъ М. Е. Салтыкова.

ПУЧИНА, комедія А. Н. Островскаго.

САНКТПЕТЕРБУРГЪ

ВЪ ТИПОГРАФІИ КАРЛА ВУЛЬФА

(На Литейной, близъ Невскаго проспекта, домъ Зыбиной № 60)

political unrest caused by the St. Petersburg fires of May 1862,[10] Chernyshevskii was held in the Peter and Paul Fortress for over a year awaiting trial.

As a part of the government's campaign against political activists, Chernyshevskii was finally convicted and, after a mock execution in May 1864, exiled to Siberia for twenty years. In 1887 he was allowed to move to Astrakhan and then to Saratov, where he settled for only four months before his death in 1889. While in exile, Chernyshevskii composed two unfinished novels, *Prolog* [*Foreword*] (1867-1870) and *Povesti v povesti* [*Novellas within a Novella*] (1863), a number of short prose pieces and a twelve-volume translation of Georg Weber's *Allgemeine Weltgeschichte für die gebildeten Stände* (1884-1888). Despite Chernyshevskii's continued importance for nineteenth-century Russian radicals,[11] none of these texts became as popular and influential as *Chto delat'?*.

[10] In his memoirs, Chernyshevskii recalls a visit from Dostoevskii, who was convinced of his influence on the rioting students: 'Через несколько дней после пожара, истребившего Толкучий рынок, слуга подал мне карточку с именем Ф. М. Достоевского и сказал, что этот посетитель желает видеть меня. Я тотчас вышел в зал; там стоял человек среднего роста или поменьше среднего, лицо которого было несколько знакомо мне по портретам. Подошедши к нему, я попросил его сесть на диван и сел подле со словами, что мне очень приятно видеть автора "Бедных людей". Он, после нескольких секунд колебания, отвечал мне на приветствие непосредственным, без всякого приступа, объяснением цели своего визита в словах коротких, простых и прямых, приблизительно следующих: "Я к вам по важному делу с горячей просьбой. Вы близко знаете людей, которые сожгли Толкучий рынок, и имеете влияние на них. Прошу вас, удержите их от повторения того, что сделано ими".' N. G. Chernyshevskii, 'Moi svidaniia s F. M. Dostoevskim', in *F. M. Dostoevskii v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, ed. by A. S. Dolinin, 2 vols (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), I (1990), pp. 5-7 (p. 5). A historical, albeit ideologically biased, account of Chernyshevskii's involvement with the young radicals can be found in N. N. Novikova, B. M. Kloss, *N. G. Chernyshevskii vo glave revoliutsionerov 1861 goda* (Moscow: Nauka, 1981). For a more balanced view, see Paperno*, Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, p. 21.

[11] Even after his incarceration, Chernyshevskii remained a popular figure among the Russian radicals, as evidenced by their memoirs, summarised in *Spodvizhniki Chernyshevskogo*, ed. by V. A. Prokof'ev et al. (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1961).

Chto delat'? was banned immediately after publication but had nonetheless become a key text for the widespread underground radical movement. Popular among young idealist readers, at some point it was picked up by a fourteen-year-old Vladimir Ul'ianov. The novel did not impress him at first, but eventually became much appreciated by its probably most influential reader. In Lenin's own words, *Chto delat'?* '[его] перепахал'[12] and he remained a devoted reader of Chernyshevskii ever since.

Before the novel's explosive nature became obvious to the censors, *Sovremennik* managed to publish the entire text of *Chto delat'?* in its March, April and May issues.[13] Very soon issues of the journal containing the novel were confiscated from the booksellers and until 1917 the only editions available to readers were either smuggled in from abroad or produced illegally.[14] The demand, however, was so high that, according to contemporary accounts, bound pages of the March-May issues of *Sovremennik* containing the novel were sold for up to twenty five rubles. By the end of the century, the price for a copy of the original *Sovremennik*

[12] N. G. Valentinov, *Nedorisovannyi portret* (Moscow: Terra, 1993), p. 495. In his memoirs, Valentinov recalls a conversation with Lenin, when he mentioned the effect that *Chto delat'?* had on him. Lenin would later use Chernyshevskii's title for his own pamphlet *Chto delat?: nabolevshie voprosy nashego dvizheniia* (Stuttgart, 1902). See also V. I. Lenin, *Lenin o literature i iskusstve* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1976), p. 647.

[13] Even though the first negative review from the censorship committee was produced as early as 15 May 1862, V. N. Beketov still approved the publication of the issue of *Sovremennik*' that contained the rest of the novel on 18 May 1863. For a detailed reconstruction of the circumstances of the novel's publication and its censorial history see Demchenko, Pokusaev, *N. G. Chernyshevskii: nauchnaia biografiia,* pp. 211-15; Evgen'ev-Maksimov, *Poslednie gody "Sovremennika": 1863-1866*, pp. 54-66; S. A. Reiser, 'Nekotorye problemy izucheniia romana "Chto delat'?"', in *Chto delat'?* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975), pp. 782-834 (p. 782-834).

[14] Three subsequent editions of *Chto delat'?* were published in Geneva by M. K. Elpidin (1867, 1876, 1902), and a photo-reprint edition was published in Leipzig by E. L. Kasporovich in 1897. For more information on the circulation of illegal editions and hand-written copies see Reiser, ibid., pp. 788-89. Irina Paperno also offers statistics for handwritten illegal copies that acquired the status of a cultural artifact, see Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, pp. 27-8.

1863 issues went as high as 60 rubles.[15] Testimonials attesting to the novel's popularity abound in numerous private documents, from recollections of retired revolutionaries to the literary memoirs of the members of the establishment, such as the publishing tycoon Aleksei Suvorin or the painter Il'ia Repin. In 1906 the ban was lifted, and by 1917 *Chto delat'?* had been reissued four times. By 1975, the novel had gone through sixty five editions in the USSR in Russian[16] with the print run coming up to more than six million copies.

Chto delat'?: Iz rasskazov o novykh liudiakh tells a story of Vera Pavlovna Rozal'skaia and her forward-minded lovers, the medical students Lopukhov and Kirsanov. The novel became known as the gospel of Russian political radicalism: dealing with contemporary issues, it offered a whole generation an example of how to channel their revolutionary aspirations into productive activity. And yet, despite its utilitarian purpose, the novel featured extensive use of metanarrative, a strategy designed to emphasise the text's artificiality and ontological ambiguity.

In this chapter, I discuss approaches to metanarrative in Chernyshevskii studies over the years and in the literary criticism of the 1860s. Following that, I analyse Chernyshevskii's understanding of the ontology of literary fiction in the context of contemporary public debates on politics and aesthetics. Finally, I provide a close reading of the novel's metafictional passages, focussing particularly on instances of

[15] Reiser, ibid., pp. 788-89.

[16] The overall number of published editions was significantly higher since *Chto delat'?* was published in other languages of the constituent republics of the USSR, to be circulated in the local libraries. How many of these volumes were printed to meet the actual demand and how many to meet the governmental quota remains a subject for further research. For a full bibliography of the translations up to 1975, see B. L. Kandel, 'Bibliografiia perevodov romana "Chto delat'?" na iazyki narodov SSSR i na inostrannye iazyki', in *Chto delat'?* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975), pp. 862-69.

metalepsis – the crossing of the ontological border between literary fiction and objective reality on the text of the novel.

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The majority of academic studies on Chernyshevskii were published in Russia and the Soviet Union in the period from 1910s to 1980s,[17] before the theory of metafiction was integrated into the field of Russian studies. And yet, metanarrative featured so prominently in *Chto delat'?*, that Soviet scholars found various ways of analysing it with the help of available methodologies.

The novel's metalepses were conceptualised as aberrations of the narrative voice, or its equivalents in terms of Soviet literary criticism, 'image of the author' [образ автора] and 'author-narrator' [автор-повествователь].[18] The existence of the

[17] For a historical overview of secondary literature on Chernyshevskii see U. A. Gural'nik, *Nasledie N.G. Chernyshevskogo-pisatelia i sovetskoe literaturovedenie: itogi, zadachi, perspektivy izucheniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980), and for a detailed periodization of secondary literature see M. I. Vaysman, 'Problemy osveshcheniia romana N. G. Chernyshevskogo "Chto delat'?" v nauchnoi i kriticheskoi literature (1863-2011)', *Vestnik Permskogo universiteta. Rossiiskaia i zarubezhnaia filologiia*, 1 (2011), 130-39. For the sake of brevity, the review offered in this chapter covers only the works that discuss the problem of metanarrative in Chernyshevskii's writings.

[18] 'Образ автора' was a definition used in Soviet literary scholarship that was roughly equivalent to Wayne C. Booth's 'implied author'. For more on the Soviet conceptualization of this narrative device, see William Mills Todd III, 'Discoveries and advances in literary theory, 1960s–1980s: Neoformalism, The Linguistic Model, and Beyond', in *A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond*, ed. by Evgenii Dobrenko and Galin Tihanov (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), pp. 230-49 (p. 233). Even though B. O. Korman's method can be seen as an original Soviet equivalent of Seymur Chatnam's and Wayne C. Booth's work on the idea 'implied author' and Wolfgang Iser's 'implied reader', the way it was put to practice was not always as rigorous. For a representative example of the complete confusion between the historical author, implied author, narrator and implied reader, see a 1978 article by M. V. Teplinskii 'Avtor-povestvovatel' v romane N. G. Chernyshevskogo "Chto delat?"', *N. G. Chernyshevskii: stat'i, issledovaniia i materialy*, 8 (1978), 127-37. In this article, Teplinskii purported to analyse the 'image of the author' as a 'genre-building factor'. In fact, what he discusses is the historical figure of the author rather than the function of the narrator/narrative voice in the novel. He argued that it was

multiple narrative voices was explained by employing definitions such as 'authorial thought' [авторская мысль].[19] This 'authorial thought' was defined as a combination of disembodied narrative voices that provided reflections on general philosophical, historical, ethical and aesthetical topics, and emphasized the difference between the voice of the author and the voices of his characters.

Instances of metanarration in the novel were described as extra-diegetic 'out-of-plot elements' [внесюжетные элементы][20] that merged the novel's 'inner' and 'outer' plots. The essence of metalepsis – a transgression of narrative levels within the text – was interpreted as a crossing of those multiple plot lines.

According to G. A. Tamarchenko, an author of a number of books and articles on *Chto delat'?*, the narrator of the novel mediated between the inner 'love plot' of Vera Pavlovna and the outer 'revolutionary plot' of Rakhmetov.[21] Another scholar, Iu. K. Rudenko, suggested a different division of plots: the inner plot of the new people's life featuring an extradiegetic omniscient narrator [внесюжетная фигура] and an outer plot of the author/reader polemic. Rudenko noted the constant crossings of ontological levels between those plots, acknowledging that the novel functioned

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wrong to assume that 'real Chernyshevskii' was a character in the novel, since in that case the chronology of the events of the plot does not make sense. What escaped the critic's attention was a possibility of an ontological transformation of a historical figure into a literary character that was deliberately affected by the writer, using this as an authentication strategy. An impressive recent attempt to look at the auto-biographical motives in Chernyshevskii's work from the point of view of narratology has been recently undertaken by V. S. Vakhrushev. See V. S. Vakhrushev, '"Chto delat'?" i "Avtobiografia" N. G. Chernyshevskogo: igrovye khody avtorskoi mysli', *N. G. Chernyshevskii: stat'i, issledovania, materialy*, 13 (1999), 14-30.

[19] G. E. Tamarchenko, '"Chto delat'?" i russkii roman shestidesiatykh godov', in *Chto delat'?* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975), pp. 747-82 (p. 777).

[20] Ibid., p. 761.

[21] Ibid., p. 755. Tamarchenko also elaborates on the same topic in his monograph on Chernyshevskii: G. E. Tamarchenko, *Chernyshevskii-romanist* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1976), pp. 231-63.

simultaneously as a self-contained fictional model of reality as well as a part of the same model.[22]

Neither Tamarchenko nor Rudenko, nor other major Chernyshevskii scholars such as N. A. Verderevskaia, M. T. Pinaev and P. A. Nikolaev, distinguished between frame-breaking and non-frame-breaking metalepses in the novel. As a result, they have analysed the narrator's interaction with his character Rakhmetov and the 'perspicacious reader' as events happening on the same ontological level. Other instances of the narrator's turn into a character were also addressed mainly in the context of plot dynamics.

Instead, the critics focussed on 'supplementary' (Tamarchenko) or 'framing' (Rudenko) plot of the author-reader relationship. The genealogy of this plot was traced to Pushkin's 'lyrical asides' [лирические отступления] and Gogol''s polemics with the antagonistic reader in *Mertvye dushi*.[23] With the few exceptions,

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[22] Iu. K. Rudenko, *Chernyshevskii-romanist i literaturnye traditsii* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1989), pp. 81, 232.

[23] The Soviet ideological bias had a remarkable effect on the scholars' investigations into the genealogy of Chernyshevskii's narrative strategies. Since Chernyshevskii's intellectual genealogy had to be strictly progressive, comparative studies were very selective and had a distinct preference for Laurence Sterne (N. L. Brodskii, N. P. Sidorov, *Kommentarii k romanu N. G. Chernyshevskogo "Chto delat'?"* (Moscow: Mir, 1933), p. 57; Rudenko, *Chernyshevskii-romanist i literaturnye traditsii*, p. 136). Until the 1990s, the problem of literary influences on Chernyshevskii in terms of narrative strategies was addressed in a very specific way, reaffirming Chernyshevskii's absolute originality. In this spirit, N. A. Verderevskaia claimed in 1980 that 'the novel's main defining feature, the structural and compositional role of the author and the elements of framing' was absolutely unique to *Chto delat'?*. Along with the 'device of using the author as a character and a participant in the novel's events' it, according to this scholar, had 'no analogues in the European novel of the nineteenth century or earlier periods'. (N. A. Verderevskaia, *Russkii roman 40-60-kh godov XIX veka: tipologiia zhanrovykh form* (Kazan': Izdatel'stvo Kazanskogo universiteta, 1980), p. 107). I have written elsewhere on the problems of studying Chernyshevskii from a comparative point of view and in particular on the influence that eighteenth-century English literature and philosophy had on *Chto delat'?* (see M. Vaysman, ''Unnecessary Melodrama': Ideology and Narrative Legacy in Nikolai

the narrator's frequent interactions with the 'perspicacious reader' were examined for their ideological content and interpreted reductively as Chernyshevskii's attempts to polemicise with the censors.

In the same vein, traditional Soviet interpretation of the text's intentional ambivalence was based on the assumption that Chernyshevskii wrote *Chto delat'?* in 'Aesopian language' [Эзопов язык].[24] The use of this writing technique, obscuring the political argument with a fable-like plot, presumably helped Chernyshevskii to fool the censors and smuggle his ideas out to *Sovremennik*'s subscribers who would be able to decode his veiled messages. In 1979, Rudenko suggested that a division of two readerships into censors and appreciative readers was too simplistic. The critic argued that Chernyshevskii played the two types of implied readers off each other in order to emphasise the differences in their aesthetic rather than ideological preferences.[25]

Most importantly, Rudenko has identified the novel's dual preoccupation with the 'aesthetics of the novel, persistently discussed in the novel's text itself', as well as its focus on didacticism.[26] The narrator [образ рассказчика] fulfilled not just the traditional function of authenticating the verisimilitude of the 'new people' but also acted as the reader's mentor, whose didactic intent affected all the narrator/reader

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Chernyshevskii's *What Is to Be Done?* (1863) and William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794)', *Modern Language Review*, 112 ,1 (2017), pp. 1-19.

[24] For the history of the term and its use as a metastylistic device see Lev Loseff, *On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature* (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1984), pp. 23-29.

[25] Iu. K. Rudenko, *Roman N. G. Chernyshevskogo "Chto delat'?": Esteticheskoe svoeobrazie i khudozhestvennyi metod* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo LGU, 1979), pp. 2, 8. In his study of Russian utopias, Morson also focuses on this division of readers in two groups. Ultimately, he traces it back to the general rhetoric of apocalyptic narratives, in which the reader has to either accept the view the narrator is advocating or face existential annihilation. Morson, *The Boundaries of Genre*, p. 99.

[26] Rudenko, *Chernyshevskii-romanist i literaturnye traditsii*, pp. 20, 39, 19.

communication. Later, in 1981, Gary Saul Morson would refer to this effect as 'didactic frame-breaking', '"baring" by exaggeration the devices it employs'.[27]

The tendency to analyse the poetics of *Chto delat'?* in terms of the binary 'author'/'reader' opposition was so persistent that it has been carried over into the few contemporary studies of Chernyshevskii's fiction. For example, Tat'iana Metlasova's 2006's study of intertextuality in *Povesti v povesti*[28] effectively analysed instances of metanarrative in Chernyshevskii's second novel, focussing particularly on the narratorial voice. And yet, limited by her use of methodologies of B. Korman, V. Vinogradov and only marginally Roland Barthes, Metlasova defined the instability of the narratorial voice as a constant change of the 'author's masks' [авторские маски], leaving the ontological implications of this strategy unexplored.

Outside of Russia, Andrew Drozd in his major 2001 study *Chernyshevskii's* What Is to Be Done?*: A Reevaluation,* briefly focussed on metanarrative in *Chto delat'?* in his close reading of the novel's preface. Drozd noted the novel's structural similarity to Laurence Sterne's fiction and acknowledged 'the constant alteration of the illusion of reality followed by the smashing of that illusion' as the one of the 'organizing principles'[29] of the novel. Gary Saul Morson's analysis of the novel in *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (1981) also emphasised the meta-literary nature of the next. Self-referentiality in *Chto delat'?*, according to Morson, was aimed at debating the form

[27] Morson, *The Boundaries of Genre*, p. 99.

[28] T. M. Metlasova, *Intertekstual'nost', reministsentsii i avtorskie maski v romane N. G. Chernyshevskogo "Povesti v povesti". Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata filologicheskikh nauk* (Saratov: Saratovskii gosudarstvennyi universistet, 2006).

[29] Andrew M. Drozd, *Chernyshevskii's 'What Is to Be Done?': A Reevaluation* (Evanston, Il.: Northwestern University Press, 2001), p. 74.

of the novel while practicing it, 'constantly discussing, incorporating, and parodying the novel's traditional forms and plots'.[30]

The importance of metanarrative in the novel was additionally stressed by Charles A. Moser. In *Esthetics as Nightmare*, Moser distinguished between the novel's explicit and implicit statements addressing problems of literature and the novelistic form. The critic noted that metalepsis in the novel served a similar dual purpose of 'emphasizing a work's fictional character shifting it to a remove from reality, and underlying the fact that it is merely an intellectual construct', as well as showcasing the narrator's 'didactic role: he is a mentor who tells his readers precisely what to think, comments sarcastically on their more blatant stupidities, and generally leads his ideologically uninitiated readers by the hand'.[31] Moser traced the use of this device to Pushkin and pointed out the contemporaneous use of it in Aleksei Pisemskii's *Vzbalamuchennoe more.*

Thus, it is safe to say that the prominence of metanarrative in *Chto delat'?* was so remarkable that it was noticed by Chernyshevskii scholars both in Russia and abroad, even despite the obvious methodological constraints of Soviet literary studies. However, the critics' preoccupation with Chernyshevskii's political views often led to a simplified interpretation of the narrative strategies used in his texts. In the case of metanarrative, this complex phenomenon had been conceptualised in reductive terms of the 'author/reader' opposition. Such oversimplification fails to consider the essential problems of narrative perception and focalisation levels, the

[30] Morson, *The Boundaries of Genre*, p. 99.

[31] Charles A. Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmare: Russian Literary Theory, 1855-1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 143.

use of metalepsis and parallax effect,[32] mimetic referentiality and narrative negotiation.

The present study does not aim to substitute one term for another by turning the already existing discussion of the 'image of the author' into a discussion of a 'narrative voice'. By drawing attention to the ontological irregularities of narration in *Chto delat'?* and conceptualising them as metafiction, I hope to contribute to the recently initiated process of the novel's re-evaluation.[33] Considering how very recent the narratological interest in Chernyshevskii is, determining the narrative strategies that he employs in his literary work remains an issue of pressing scholarly concern.

2. Debating *Chto delat'?*: Politics and Aesthetics in the 1860s

Thematically, *Chto delat'?* was connected to the articles Chernyshevskii published in 1860-1861, particularly 'Antropologicheskii printsip v filosofii' (1860) and 'Ne nachalo li peremeny?' (1861). These articles addressed some general social,

[32] The parallax effect, or factor, is a physical distortion of the field of vision that occurs if an object is observed from two different points of view. It has been introduced to literary theory by the scholars of narrative and fictionality. For a discussion of a relationship between mimetic realism and the parallax factor as 'distortions inherent in perception', see Stephen G. Nichols, 'Foreword' in Michael Riffaterre, *Fictional Truth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. vi-x, viii-ix.

[33] Aside from major revisionist studies by Andrew M. Drozd and Irina Paperno in English, a number of studies, conducted in the same spirit, have been published in Russia in recent years. For Russian attempts at re-defining Chernyshevskii's work and his place in the literary canon, see *"Chto delat'?" N. G. Chernyshevskogo: istoriko-funktsional'noe issledovanie*, ed. by K. N. Lomunov (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), P. Vail', A. Genis, *Rodnaia rech'* (Moscow: Nezavisimaia gazeta, 1994), pp. 125-31; A. A. Demchenko, 'Nikolai Chernyshevskii: k 180-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia', *Izvestiia Saratovskogo universiteta*, 9/1 (2009), 36-44; *N. G. Chernyshevskii: pro et contra*, ed. by A. A. Demchenko (St. Petersburg: RGKhA, 2008); V. K. Kantor, 'Srublennoe derevo zhizni. Mozhno li segodnia razmyshliat' o Chernyshevskom?', *Oktiabr'*, 2 (2000), 157-80; I. V. Kondakov, 'Ot istorii literatury – k poetike kul'tury', *Voprosy literatury*, 2 (1997), 49-59.

political and aesthetic issues that were current in public debates at the time,[34] but focussed particularly on a problem that was of great importance to Chernyshevskii personally: the relationship between art, specifically literary fiction, and reality.

The elimination of the ontological divide between art and reality was Chernyshevskii's chief philosophical concern. If the general trajectory of Chernyshevskii's intellectual development took him from the critique of Hegelian idealism to championing the anthropological materialism of Ludwig Feuerbach,[35] his views on the ontology of fiction were formed under the more immediate influence of Vissarion Belinskii.

The leading Russian literary critic of the 1840s and 50s (also wooed by Nekrasov to join the revived *Sovremennik* in 1846), Belinskii struggled to incorporate Hegel's understanding of the dualism of form and content, as well as intent and ideal, into his readings of contemporary Russian fiction. Chernyshevskii inherited this preoccupation, which resulted in a theoretical argument with the German idealist aesthetics that he constructed in his master's thesis and a practical argument with contemporary fiction that he took up in his literary criticism.

Ever since the publication of *Esteticheskie otnosheniia iskusstva k deistvitel'nosti* in 1853, Chernyshevskii had been campaigning for a new type of

[34] For more on the 1860s public debates in general and Chernyshevskii's contribution in particular, see either B. F. Egorov, *Izbrannoe, Esteticheskie idei v Rossii XIX veka* (St. Petersburg: Letnii sad, 2009), pp. 140-58, or Moser, *Esthetics as Nightmare*, pp. 31-56, 43-45, 266-68.

[35] Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior*, pp. 159-73; B. F. Egorov, 'Filosofskie osnovy mirovozzreniia shestidesiatnikov', in *Izbrannoe. Esteticheskie idei v Rossii XIX veka*, pp. 308-321. For a recent discussion of erroneous academic assumptions about Chernyshevskii's intellectual development, see A. V. Vdovin, 'Chernyshevskii vs. Feierbakh: (psevdo)istochniki dissertatsii "Esteticheskie otnosheniia iskusstva k deistvitel'nosti"', *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie*, 68/1 (2011), 39-66, Irina Paperno, 'Russkie kritiki 1830-1860-kh godov v bor'be za vlast'', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 6 (2011), 403-7.

literature to become mainstream. His dissertation, dedicated to proving the superiority of reality over its representation in art, advocated a 'utilitarian' approach to art and prioritised its didactic potential. As a critic, Chernyshevskii praised a 'responsible' type of writing that addressed social and political problems and offered ways of solving them, thus changing reality through art.[36] The idea of a utilitarian approach to literature was inspired both by the desire to conceptually eliminate the difference between art and reality and the desire to affect reality directly through the medium of art.

As Irina Paperno has pointed out, Chernyshevskii's idea of realism was based on the rejection of 'philosophical idealism for positivism, theology for Feurbachian anthropology, traditional Christian ethics for English utilitarianism, constitutional liberalism for socialism and radicalism, and romantic aesthetics for the aesthetics of realism'.[37] Paperno analysed the effect this Weltanschauung had on Chernyshevskii's ideas of literary aesthetics. The issue of the ontology of literary fiction or, as Paperno refers to it, 'the issue of the relations between literature and reality and, in the long run, the function of literature in real life' was a key concept in the contemporary aesthetics of realism that was fascinating both Chernyshevskii and his disciples, the young 'radical critics'.[38]

It was precisely through an attempt to transgress the ontological border between artistic representations of reality and objective reality itself in literary fiction

[36] Chernyshevskii discussed this approach in detail in his scathing review of Turgenev's novella *Asia* (1858). N. G. Chernyshevskii, 'Russkii chelovek na rendez-vous. Razmyshleniia po prochtenii povesti g. Turgeneva "Asia"', *Atenei*, 18 (1858), 65-89.

[37] Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, p. 8.

[38] The 'radical critics' included D. I. Pisarev, N. A. Dobroliubov and other contributing critics at *Sovremennik*, such as M. A. Antonovich. For more on Chernyshevskii's disciples, see Egorov, *Izbrannoe. Esteticheskie idei v Rossii XIX veka*, pp. 160-173, 366-383, 404-427.

that Chernyshevskii and his followers tried to reconcile the principles of realist aesthetics with a didactic impulse of utilitarian art. According to Paperno,

> on the one hand, the intention of realism (as proclaimed by radical critics) was the direct and precise representation of social reality, as close to the empirical object, or as true to life, as possible. (Truth, *instinnost'*, or authenticity of representation, became the central aesthetic category, more important than Beauty). On the other hand, realism clearly had a didactic intent and wished to have a direct impact on reality. Thus, literary characters and literary situations were claimed to have been derived from "life itself" and thereafter, "returned to reality" and offered to society as examples worthy of imitation in real life.[39]

As Lidiia Ginzburg noted in her discussion of Chernyshevskii's writings, 'литература и действительность взаимодействуют. Литература закрепляет явления действительности и возвращает их ей уже в осознанном и структурном виде — для дальнейшего воспроизведения'.[40]

Particular importance in this situation was bestowed on the literary critic, who had to become a mediator 'between the literary work and its actualization in reality'.[41] In Chernyshevskii's understanding, literature itself 'served as an intermediary between man and reality', evaluating and explaining 'the phenomena of real life, thereby making them accessible to human understanding and catalyzing action'.[42] As a result of this approach, radical criticism's arguments often produced

[39] Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, p. 8-9.

[40] L. Ia. Ginzburg, *O literaturnom geroe* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1979), p. 52.

[41] Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, p. 10.

[42] Paperno traces this approach to Chernyshevskii's work on Lessing. Ibid., p. 164.

an ontological confusion between 'the realms of literature and real life', in which 'the literary world was easily and eagerly equated with the real world'.[43]

In line with the argumentation put forward in Chernyshevskii's articles, in *Chto delat'?* manifestations of this ontological ambivalence are found throughout the novel. On the level of literary discourse, the novel makes liberal and frequent use of metanarrative, questioning the act of composing literary fiction in the process of doing it. On the level of plot and system of characters, the novel offers two final scenes, one of which involves a metaleptic appearance of a character, who could be identified as the author of the same narrative. Finally, on the level of symbolic imagery, a persistent metaphor of narrative as 'performance' or 'spectacle' conveyes the idea that nothing is what it seems to be: characters assume new identities, act under false pretenses and even such solid aspects as 'documents and common knowledge cannot serve as guarantee of the true nature of things'.[44]

Chernyshevskii's reliance on the style he had developed as a literary critic naturally led him to adopt a particular way of communicating with the reader throughout the text of the novel. Addressing the reader directly, sometimes as an ally and sometimes an adversary, was intended to recreate the rhetorical construct of the intellectual community that the thick journals projected. In *Chto delat'?*, Chernyshevskii the author merged with Chernyshevskii the critic in the figure of a self-conscious narrator, an embedded mediator between the text and the reader, providing meta-reflection on the process of a composing a work of fiction relevant to contemporary political struggle. In a way, *Chto delat'?*, presented the readers an ultimate conflation of a thick journal's content: a work of literary fiction with a suggested interpretation already integrated into the text.

[43] Ibid., p. 11.

[44] Ibid., p. 192.

This conflation of literary and publicistic discourse was not unique to Chernyshevskii. Rather, it was typical for writers who shared the radical critics' ideological and aesthetic views. These writers aimed to 'express themselves as directly as possible', in order to 'not just show, but explain, interpret for the reader the meaning of their story […] to state their own opinion of it'. That is why 'their literary devices are often bared'.[45] Their overall method could be characterised as 'an alternation of mimesis and diegesis, bordering on journalism', 'featuring an exploring, experimenting author'.[46] In this way, the intellectual, political and, one can say, discoursive climate of the 1860s, stylistically and philosophically influenced by the radical 'realist' [реальные] critics, makes Chernyshevskii's liberal use of metanarrative much less of an oddity on the contemporary literary scene than it might appear to be.

Contemporary reviews of *Chto delat'?* were sharply polarised. After the novel's publication in *Sovremennik*, Chernyshevskii became the most high profile writer and political prisoner in the country. His notoriety exacerbated the virulence of the critics' attacks and reaffirmed the loyalty of his supporters. Immediate negative reactions, such as F. M. Tolstoi's ('Rostislav') article 'Lzhemudrost' geroev g. Chernyshevskogo' in *Severnaia pchela* were swiftly answered by arguments in support of the novel, like V. S. Kurochkin's ('Znamenskii') feuilleton 'Pronitsatel'nye chitateli. (Iz rasskazov o starykh liudiakh)' in *Iskra*, *Sovremennik*'s weekly supplement.[47] Later on, N. N. Strakhov's cautious support, voiced in his

[45] N. P. Zhdanovskii, 'Osobennosti realizma pisatelei-demokratov 60-kh godov XIX v.', in *Problemy tipologii russkogo realizma*, ed. by N. L. Stepanov and U. R. Fokht (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), pp. 306-43 (p. 308).

[46] Ibid., p. 321.

[47] F. M. Tolstoi (Rostislav), 'Lzhemudrost' geroev g. Chernyshevskogo', *Severnaia pchela*, 27 May 1863, pp. 551-3; V. S. Kurochkin (Znamenskii), 'Pronitsatel'nye chitateli. (Iz rasskazov o starykh liudiakh)', *Iskra*, 32 (1863), 421-29.

article ‘Schastlivye liudi’ contrasted with D. I. Pisarev’s enthusiastic approval in ‘Novyi tip’. Among the conservatives, N. S. Leskov offered a compassionate reading of the novel in *Severnaia pchela*, whereas A. A. Fet together with V. P. Botkin, delivered a scathing attack on Chernyshevskii’s personality and political views in *Russkii vestnik*.[48]

The reviewers were mostly concerned with endorsing or rejecting the novel’s political message and rarely commented on the text’s literary merits (most agreed it had no literary merit at all). The original quality of the novel’s self-referentiality and metalepses was obscured by its topicality and direct approach to the most sensitive current questions such as radical social reform or sexual liberation. However, a few remarks from the critics can help contextualise the effect the novel’s metafictional narrative must have had on its first readers.

Leskov’s article ‘Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevskii v ego romane “Chto delat’?”’ made it obvious that contemporary readers agreed with Chernyshevskii’s claim that a true story is valuable even if it is aesthetically imperfect. Leskov acknowledged the circumstances that led Chernyshevskii to writing a work of fiction (‘на изготовление романа его вызвали обстоятельства, от него не зависящие:

[48] N. N. Strakhov, ‘Schastlivye liudi’, in *N. G. Chernyshevskii: pro et contra*, ed. by A. A. Demchenko (St. Petersburg: RGKhA, 2008), pp. 555-77; D. I. Pisarev, ‘Mysliashchii proletariat’, in ibid., pp. 436-86; N. S. Leskov, ‘Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevskii v ego romane “Chto delat’?”’, in ibid., pp. 427-36; V. P. Botkin, A. A. Fet, ‘“Chto delat’? Iz rasskazov o novykh liudiakh”. Roman N. G. Chernyshevskogo’, in ibid., pp. 486-555. This is by no means a full account of the reviews that followed the publication of *Chto delat’?*. For comprehensive guides to contemporary reception of the novel, see ‘Nikolai Chernyshevskii v rossiiskoi pamiati i kritike’, in ibid., pp. 7-51; G. E. Tamarchenko, *Romany N. G. Chernyshevskogo* (Saratov: Saratovskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1954), pp. 134-44; A. P. Skaftymov, ‘Kommentarii k zhurnal’noi redaktsii “Chto delat’?”’, in N. G. Chernyshevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [henceforth *PSS*], 15 vols (Moscow, 1939-1953), XI, pp. 702-22 (p. 706-11).

потребность в деятельности и невозможность ее в другой форме')[49] and maintained that discussing the novel's artistry [художество] was beside the point: 'а потому, кто станет пространно доказывать несостоятельность романа как беллетристического произведения, тот напрасно потратит труды и время'.

However, Chernyshevskii's use of narrative strategies common to journal polemics (addressing the reader, using the narrator as a mediator between the story and its audience, authenticating the narrative through claims of personal experience) did not pass unremarked. Maintaining that 'Г. Чернышевский публицист, и публицист известной школы',[50] Leskov pointed out one of the most significant features of the novel's poetics: its merging of the literary and publicistic discourse that upset the usual division of narrative levels typical for literary fiction.

N. Solov'ev, sharply denouncing both Chernyshevskii's views and *Sovremennik*'s general literary policy in an article 'Teoriia bezobraziia', noted that '[в романе] более всего говорит сам автор'. He drew attention to the novel's highly theoretical abstractions in which 'мысль принялась разыгрывать роль чувства' and 'жизнь […] отдана на произвол мысли, на жертву теории'.[51] The narrator's various strategies of authentication seem to have been successful, according to Nikolai Strakhov's article, in which he noted that 'прямые заявления романа о существовании новых людей невозможно подвергать никакому сомнению. […] Эти новые люди существуют'.[52] The staunchly conservative

[49] Leskov, 'Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevskii v ego romane "Chto delat'?"', p. 428.

[50] Ibid., p. 429.

[51] N. S. Solov'ev, 'Teoriia Bezobraziia', *Epokha*, 7 (1864), 1-16 (pp. 15-16).

[52] Strakhov, 'Schastlivye liudi', p. 575. For more on Strakhov's views on *Chto delat'?* see G. N. Antonova, 'N. N. Strakhov o romane "Chto delat'?"', in *N. G. Chernyshevskii: Stat'i, issledovaniia i materialy*, ed. by E. I. Pokusaev (Saratov: Izdatel'stvo Saratovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 1978), pp. 148-61.

review by Fet and Botkin interpreted the novel's playfulness as 'кривляние самого дурного тону', '[полное] картавых противоречий, вольных и невольных заиканий нашего романиста'.[53] Thus, despite the fact that the novel was widely discussed by the critics, its distinctive narrative structure remained almost unnoticed.

The absence of further notes on the novel's self-reflexivity in the multiple critical articles is partly explained by 1860s trend for turning literary reviews into polemic pieces. Due to the novel's topicality, reviews of *Chto delat'?* due to the novel's topicality, were often used as a chance to polemicise with the author's supporters and enemies. An exchange between Saltykov-Shchedrin and Zaitsev is a good example of this practice. In their pieces in *Sovremennik*'s chronicle 'Nasha obshchestvennaia zhizn''[54] and *Russkoe slovo*,[55] the two critics used Chernyshevskii's novel as an excuse to address each other's political views. Even though verisimilitude or lack thereof in Chernyshevskii's text was announced as the topic of their discussion, in fact the critics were busy debating whether Russian society has any need of the real 'new people'.[56] A conservative but sympathetic

[53] Botkin, Fet ;"Chto delat'? Iz rasskazov o novykh liudiakh". Roman N. G. Chernyshevskogo', pp. 491, 530.

[54] M. E. Saltykov, 'Nasha obshchestvennaia zhizn'. X. Mart 1864 goda', in *Sobranie sochinenii*, 20 vols (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1966-77), VI: *Stat'i 1863-1864* (1968), pp. 290-330 (p. 324).

[55] V. A. Zaitsev, 'Glupovtsy, popavshie v "Sovremennik"', *Russkoe slovo*, 2 (1864), 34-42.

[56] Explaining his attitude to Chernyshevskii's novel in a note, addressed to the journal *Epokha*, Saltykov wrote: 'Прежде всего, из чего он вывел заключение о враждебности моих отношений к роману? Если из моего отзыва о вислоухих и юродствующих, так ведь там говорится не о самом романе, а об известном на него взгляде и о тех поучениях, которые, под влиянием этого взгляда, из него извлекаются.' M. E. Saltykov, 'GG. Semeistvu M. M. Dostoevskogo, izdiushchemu zhurnal "Epokha"', in *Sobranie sochinenii*, VI, pp. 524-31 (p. 527). For more on Saltykov's reflections on *Chto delat'?*, see P. S. Reifman, 'Shchedrin i Chernyshevskii (po materialam khronik "Nasha obshchestvennaia zhizn'"), *Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo univesiteta. Trudy po russkoi i slavianskoi filologii. XI. Literaturovedenie*, 209 (1968), 109-12; E. I. Pokusaev, 'N. G. Chernyshevskii i M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin', *Uchenye zapiski Saratovskogo gosudarstvennogo*

critic, A. M. Bukharev stated directly: 'Если угодно, я пользуюсь романом г. Чернышевского к разъяснению того, что в самом деле надо нам делать при нынешнем умственном и нравственном состоянии нашего общества и отечества'.[57] Another reason for the scarcity of such remarks specifically on the novel's narrative structure, as Igor' Kondakov suggested, would have been the novel's withdrawal from the public sphere almost immediately after its publication.[58]

Because of Chernyshevskii's established career as a literary critic, the narrative voice of the novel must have seemed a natural extension of Chernyshevskii-the critic's voice into literary fiction itself. It was probably too obvious to pay it any attention, to the point that some reviewers, like V. Kurochkin in his playful article, adopted the tone of the conversation with the perspicacious reader to deal with the novel's detractors.[59] The self-referential style of polemic journal articles of the thick journals would have been expected from a writer of Chernyshevskii's political and aesthetic persuasion. It came as a logical consequence of his declared interest in bridging the ontological gap between literature and reality, equating the description of radical change and its implementation to real life.

The novel's multiple metalepses repeatedly merged the semi-fictional world of the narrator with the world of his addressee, the perspicacious reader. Opening with two chapters that exposed the power of narrative manipulation, *Chto delat'?* featured

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universiteta im. N. G. Chernyshevskogo, 19 (1948), 35-101; I. P. Viduetskaia, 'Roman "Chto delat'?" v otsenke revoliutsionno-demokraticheskoi kritiki', in *"Chto delat'?" N. G. Chernyshevskogo: istoriko-funktsional'noe issledovanie*, pp. 78-107
(p. 82).

[57] A. M. Bukharev, 'O romane g. Cheryshevskogo 'Chto delat'?'', in *Chernyshevskii: Pro et contra*, pp. 577-616 (p. 579).

[58] I. V. Kondakov, '"Chto delat'?" kak filosofsko-intellektual'nyi roman (k dialektike soznaniia i samosoznaniia stanoviashchegosia zhanra)', in *"Chto delat'?" N.G. Chernyshevskogo: istoriko-funktsional'noe issledovanie*, pp. 183-218 (p. 191).

[59] Kurochkin (Znamenskii), 'Pronitsatel'nye chitateli. (Iz rasskazov o starykh liudiakh)', pp. 421-29.

a narrator and characters that straddled the ontological boundary between the world in which the story was told and the world of which it told. Liberal uses of authenticating strategies such as introducing the narrator as an eye-witness of the events, incorporating financial and statistical documents as well a references to real-time events into the literary text, brought the characters' world as close to the readers as possible. Metafiction was precisely the type of narrative best suited for such a goal – as a method of ontological enquiry in fiction, it fitted Chernyshevskii's general approach to literature as a theorist and a practitioner.

3. *Chto delat'?* as Metafiction

Similar to the majority of novels published at the time, *Chto delat'?* came out in *Sovremennik* serially: its first chapters appeared in print while the rest of the text was still a work in progress. Chernyshevskii passed the manuscript to Nekrasov part by part, as soon as he finished writing. Consequently, Chernyshevskii would not have seen the text as a whole, neither in proofs, nor in its published version since he was not allowed to receive daily newspapers or journals. When finished, the novel was, according to A. N. Pypin, Chernyshevskii's cousin and co-editor at *Sovremennik*, 'published without any omissions'.[60]

Chernyshevskii had hardly any time for editing as he was often questioned by the Investigating Committee, providing oral and written statements for his trial all through spring and summer that year.[61] At the same time, he was busy working on

[60] 'Zapiska ot 18 fevralia 1881', *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, 22 (1927), p. 226. Cit. in Reiser, 'Nekotorye problemy izucheniia romana "Chto delat'?"', p. 783.

[61] For more on Chernyshevskii' trial and its day by day chronology, see *Delo Chernyshevskogo: sbornik dokumentov*, ed. by N. M. Chernyshevskaia and I. V. Porokh (Saratov: Privolzhskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1968); for an overview of contemporary trials of other radicals see M. K. Lemke, *Politicheskie protsessy M. I. Mikhailova, D. I. Pisareva i N. G. Chernyshevskago: po neizdannym dokumentam* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo O. N. Popovoi, 1907).

two commercial translations in order to earn money.[62] His supply of writing paper was gradually diminishing and he resorted to reusing the margins of previously discarded pages.

As a result, the difference between the early pre-drafted chapters and those composed without any preliminary drafts is discernible: the first four chapters that benefited from Chernyshevskii's brisk but careful editing are noticeably more coherent than chapters five and six, written directly as a fair copy. The small alterations of the first draft, made when Chernyshevskii was writing out fair copies of chapters one to four, have been carefully preserved and published as a part of the 1975 academic edition of *Chto delat'?*.[63] The close reading of the novel's passages, that I will offer in this chapter, compares the first draft to *Sovremennik*'s 1863 published version of the text, examining the changes that were made in the novel's metafictional passages.

The idea of writing a fictional piece that would allow him to reach readers from the Peter and Paul Fortress took shape quite soon after Chernyshevskii was imprisoned. Despite his long career as a journalist, Chernyshevskii was not an experienced fiction writer and his choice to start working on a 'a fictional short-story' [беллетристический рассказ][64] would not have been obvious. In many ways, his decision to turn to a novelistic form was purely practical. As a sole provider for his family, Chernyshevskii was concerned about the loss of income that naturally

[62] Reiser, 'Nekotorye problemy izucheniia romana "Chto delat'?"', p. 794.

[63] '"Chto delat'? Rasskazy o novykh liudiakh" (Chernovaia redaktsiia i varianty otdel'nykh glav)', in *Chto delat'?* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975), pp. 345-715.

[64] This is how Chernyshevskii referred to his writing project in the letter he submitted to the investigating committee to ask for permission to buy and start translating Friedrich Christoph Schlosser's *Weltgeschichte in zusammenhängender Erzählung* (1815-57). N. G. Chernyshevskii, 'Letter to the Superintendent of the Peter and Paul Fortress from 20 December 1862', cited in Demchenko, Pokusaev, *N. G. Chernyshevskii: nauchnaia biografiia*, p. 209.

followed his incarceration. According to *Sovremennik*'s business correspondence, to alleviate his position Nekrasov promised to pay four thousand rubles for a novel.[65]

Initially, Chernyshevskii planned a multi-volume *Istoriia material'noi i umstvennoi deiatel'nosti chelovechestva* that would have been followed by *Kriticheskii slovar' idei i faktov* based on it.[66] However, it soon became clear that, since he was writing for the sake of the general good of society, in order to 'explain to people what truth is and how they should think and live',[67] he had to look for a form that, above all, would be accessible to readers. Very confident of his abilities,[68] Chernyshevskii intended to rework the material intended for *Istoriia* 'in the lightest, most popular spirit, almost in the manner of a novel, with anecdotes, scenes and witticisms, such that even people who read nothing but novels would read it'.[69]

Aware of the contemporary public's reading tastes and habits, Chernyshevskii was conscious of the fact that the readers' interest had to be captured and retained from beginning.[70] With this in mind, he started the novel by, in his own words, putting some 'bait' on the narrative 'hook' in two introductory chapters titled 'The Fool' ['Дурак'] and 'The First Consequence of this Foolish Affair' ['Первое

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[65] Ibid., p. 210.

[66] Chernyshevskii, 'Letter to O. S. Chernyshevskaia from 5 October 1862', p. 456.

[67] Ibid.

[68] 'Все […], что нужно для хорошего сказочника – вроде Диккенса или Фильдинга, или, из наших, Пушкина и Лермонтова (в их прозе), у меня есть в достаточно хорошем качестве и изобилии. Версификация не дана мне природою. Но проза моя – хорошая поэзия.' N. G. Chernyshevskii, 'Letter to O. S. Chernyshevskaia from 10 March 1883', in *PSS,* XV: *Pis'ma 1877-1889 godov* (1950), pp. 388-90 (p. 390).

[69] Chernyshevskii, 'Letter to O. S. Chernyshevskaia from 5 October 1862', p. 456

[70] Vinogradov and Elizavetina's article on the image of the reader contains a good exploration of Chernyshevskii's awareness of the contemporary public's literary tastes. See K. V. Vinogradov, G. G. Elizavetina, 'Predstavlenie o chitatele v demokraticheskoi kritike 'shestidesiatykh godov', in '*"Chto delat'?" N. G. Chernyshevskogo: istoriko-funktsional'noe issledovanie*, pp. 14-37 (p. 28-33).

следствие дурацкого дела']. With the exception of these two chapters, the rest of the novel followed a linear plot.

Chapter 1 'Vera Pavlovna's Life with Her Family' ['Жизнь Веры Павловны в родительском семействе'] introduces the novel's protagonist, Vera Pavlovna and tells the story of her life up to the point when her unwanted suitor Storeshnikov proposed marriage. Chapter 2, 'First Love and Legal Marriage' ['Первая любовь и законный брак'], describes first Vera's courtship and then her marriage to her brother's tutor, the young medical student Lopukhov. Lopukhov, a progressive young man, marries Vera in order to free her from the tyranny of her parents' household and to help her start an independent life.

The rest of the melodramatic plot unfolds in the following three chapters: 'Marriage and Second Love' ['Замужество и вторая любовь']; 'Second Marriage' ['Второе замужество'] and 'New Characters and a Conclusion' ['Новые лица и развязка']. Vera sets up her own household and then, after a series of inspiring dreams, a sewing cooperative. The readers find out that after Vera fell in love with her husband's best friend Kirsanov, her husband Lopukhov faked his suicide to free her to marry her new true love. Lopukhov then departed for America, only to come back shortly after under a new name of Charles Beaumont.[71] Upon his return, he also fell in love again and married a young heiress. Reconciled, the two couples continue to socialise and work together to hasten the arrival of the fair future.

[71] For innovative interpretations of Lopukhov's travel to America and the metamorphosis see A. A. Arustamova, 'F. M. Dostoevski vs N. G. Chernyshevskii: polemika o Novom Svete i russkom cheloveke', in *Russko-amerikanskii dialog XIX veka: istoriko-literaturnyi aspekt* (Perm': Permskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2008), pp. 306-25; A. M. Etkind, *Tolkovanie Puteshestvii: Rossiia i Amerika v travelogakh i intertekstakh* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2001), pp. 79-81.

The novel winds up with an enigmatic short chapter 'Change of Scene' ['Перемена декораций'], set in the near future of 1865. It features 'a lady in mourning' [дама в трауре] and 'a man of about thirty years old' [мужчина лет тридцати] who are usually considered to be the representations of Chernyshevskii's wife Olga and himself in the future, after he is freed from imprisonment by a change of political regime.[72]

In the following close reading of the novel's metafictional passages, I analyse the introductory chapters as metadiegetic prolepses and explore the relationship between the novel's unreliable metadiegetic narrator and his multiple addressees. Finally, I focus on the novel's most significant metalepses and the way they are used to maintain an intentional ontological ambiguity throughout the entire text.

3.1. Metadiegetic Prolepses

The two introductory sub-chapters of the novel are often overlooked in close readings of *Chto delat'?* in favour of the famous preface. And yet, they are crucial to any attempts to interpret the rest of the novel. These scenes, I would argue, do not only 'hook' the readers' attention but also foreshadow the kind of interpretative effort will be required from them throughout the novel. The very first instalment of the novel's text, its metadiegetic prolepsis,[73] is a meditation on the power of interpretation and the dangers of constructed narratives.

[72] For an overview of the history of the chapter's interpretation see Michael R. Katz, 'The Conclusion of *What Is to Be Done?*', *Russian Review*, 41 (1982), 181-96. An authoritative attribution of characters has been carried out by B. Ia. Bukhshtab and published in B. Ia. Bukhshtab, 'Zapiska Chernyshevskogo o romane "Chto delat'?"', in *Bibliograficheskie razyskaniia po russkoi literature XIX veka* (Moscow: Kniga, 1966), pp. 117-32.

[73] I am referring here to Rimmon-Kenan's updated definition of Genette's 'prolepsis' as 'telling the future before its time', 'replac[ing] the kind of suspense deriving from the question "What will happen next?" by another kind of suspense, revolving around the question "How is it going to happen?".

The novel's first chapter opens with an account of a suicide that has been reported in one of the big St. Petersburg hotels. A man had checked in but then disappeared from his room during the night. A police officer, arriving at the scene, finds a suicide note and explains to the bemused hotel staff that the man who shot himself on the nearby bridge last night must have been their. However, the mystery of the hotel guest remains unresolved as no body is found.

The arriving police official is interpreting the events for the hotel staff who are waiting to see what his visit could illuminate ['послали за полицею и теперь ждут, что увидят с нею']. Having discovered the note, he announces: 'Так вот оно, штука-то теперь и понятна, а то никак не могли сообразить!'.[74] He then tells the story that will be repeated and discussed by the servants: 'Рассказ полицейского чиновника долго служил предметом одушевленных пересказов и рассуждений в гостинице. История была вот какого рода'.[75]

These two lines make use of two words routinely used in Russian to describe a narrative, 'рассказ' and 'история'. Here, however, they are used as two nouns emphasizing the distinction of the event [история][76] and the narrative [рассказ] that was constructed around it. The narrative here is an interpretation of factual events,

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Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 48. For Genette's original definition, see Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 72-3. For a discussion of metadiegesis as a 'second-degree' narrative, see ibid., pp. 231-34.

[74] Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?*, p. 7.

[75] Ibid. The use of underscoring is mine thoughout the thesis unless otherwise indicated.

[76] The explanatory dictionary of Chernyshevskii's contemporary, Vladimir Dal''s *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivago Velikoruskago iazyka* (1861) lists the meaning of 'event' [происшествие, приключение, случай, встреча, неприятность] as a secondary one for 'history' [история]. 'Istoriia', in *Tolkovyi slovar' Dalia onlain* <http://slovardalja.net/word.php?wordid=12229> [accessed 18 August 2016]. The word retains the same homonymy in contemporary Russian: see 'istoriia' in *Slovar'Ozhegova: tolkovyi slovar' russkogo iazyka* <http://www.ozhegov.com/words/11435.shtml> [accessed 18 August 2016].

produced by the agent of the state power to be disseminated and internalized (‘одушевленные пересказы и рассуждения’) by the public (here, symbolically, the servants [прислуга]).

The novel proceeds to describe the confrontation between the police officers and passersby at the scene of the crime. In an attempt to make sense of what has happened a mass of passersby spontaneously breaks up into two groups: a ‘conservative multitude’ [консервативное большинство] that believes the man had shot himself and a ‘progressive’ minority [прогрессисты] who believe that a more complex series of determinations are likely at play. The two groups differ in the interpretation of the event but agree on their judgement of the perpetrator, whom they declare to be an ‘idiot’ [дурак]. In the end, after a hat with a bullet hole is found in the river, the conservative interpretation ‘finally wins over the spirit of denial and progress’ [дух отрицания и прогресса побежден окончательно].[77]

The opening scene of the novel offers its readers a symbolic model of the origin, transmission and interpretation of narratives, pointing out the ideological motivations behind different interpretations. In the overall structure of the novel, it acts as metadiegetic prolepsis, building up a particular kind of ‘interpretational’ suspense. The story catches up with the ‘bait’ cast at the very beginning of the novel at the end of chapter 3, when Rakhmetov presents Vera with a note from Lopukhov, explaining the reasons behind his mysterious disappearance and fake suicide. The readers, now armed with hindsight, are reminded about this model of the interpretive apparatus offered to them earlier as a warning.

This account of a sensational event is followed directly by a scene of domestic happiness, disrupted by the news of the same mysterious death. In the sub-chapter

[77] Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat’?,* p. 8.

'The First Consequence of this Foolish Affair' ['Первое следствие дурацкого дела'], the readers are thus plunged into the action in medias res. The second introductory chapter functions as an additional 'hook' for the readers' attention: no explanation is given as to who the characters in this scene are or how they are connected to the rest of the story that unfolds in the next six chapters.

Following these two introductory chapters,[78] comes the novel's preface, quite possibly the most analysed three pages of Chernyshevskii's entire oeuvre and one of the overtly metafictional parts of the novel. If the first two instalments are written in the intentionally brisk style of contemporary realist narratives (the works Chernyshevskii was hoping to emulate included texts by N. G. Pomialovskii or N. V. Uspenskii),[79] the preface openes with a direct appeal to the reader and proceedes with an extreme narrative self-consciousness. Almost immediately, it set up the

[78] Note that Michael Katz's 1989 English translation offers different chapters division, in which the 'Preface' is a stand-alone piece. N. G. Chernyshevsky, *What Is to Be Done?*, trans. by M. Katz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 47-49. In my opinion, this tampering with the novel's structure is ill-advised, especially since the manuscript version of *Chto delat'?* has an extra sub-chapter, 'Second beginning' [Вторая завязка] that was later eliminated (Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?,* pp. 351-54). Chernyshevskii was clearly playing with the conventional structures of novelistic beginnings. I have used Katz's translation of the chapter titles for the sake of conformity throughout, since his is the latest and most authoritative edition of *Chto delat'?* in English. However, the translations of the text of the novel, used for the purposes of close reading, are my own unless otherwise indicated.

[79] '… ты не взудмай заключить, что я так прямо и объясняю тебе, что я нисколько не похож на рассказчиков, которых ты считаешь великими художниками, что мой рассказ ты должна поставить ниже их повестей, – нет, он слишком слаб сравнительно с произведениями людей, действительно одаренных сильным талантом, например с "Мещанским счастьем", "Молотовым", с маленькими пьесками г. Успенского, - но ведь ты, моя добрейшая публика, еще не разобралась, что эти вещи разнятся, как небо от земли, от восхищающих тебя сочинений прославленных твоих художников, – с этими-то сочинениями ты смело ставь наряду мо рассказ по достоинству исполнения, а по содержанию он выше их.' Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?,* p. 356.

novel's main rhetorical opposition of the narrator and his multiple addressees, and established its governing discursive principle of ontological uncertainty.

In keeping with the previous two sub-chapters, the preface functioned as a secondary explanatory prolepsis that was even more explicitly metadiegetic. Openly addressing the issue of literary conventions and the role of the reader in the functioning of a literary work, the preface also referred to the 'future before its time',[80] but this time in terms of the readers' future interaction with the text itself. Partly evoking the typical rhetoric of the thick journals' editor's letters and partly emulating the didactic asides of Sterne and Fielding,[81] the preface defined the manner of the novel's narrative voice that would be sustained throughout the entire text.

Moreover, through the constant use of the word 'audience' [публика], referring to the reading public but also evoking spectators at the theater, the preface establishes the metaphor of narrative as a performance that is carried on throughout the novel and culminates in the title of the final chapter, 'Peremena dekoratsii'. Referring back to the first of the introductory sub-chapters, this metaphor presents the text of the novel as a performance open to multiple interpretations.

The main agent of performing the narrative is, of course, the novel's maverick narrator. Constantly engaging his addressees and interlocutors in direct dialogue, he directes the readers' attention to the aspects of the text that he wants to emphasise (for example, his thoughts on the 'new people' and their progressive way of life) and

[80] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 48.

[81] On Chernyshevskii and Sterne see above, footnote 148; on Chernyshevskii and Fielding see Iu. K. Rudenko, *Chernyshevskii-romanist i literaturnye traditsii. Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni doktora filologicheskikh nauk* (Leningrad: Leningradskii gosudrastvennii universitet, 1990), p. 27.

distracted them from the issues that might obstruct the novel's dissemination (the implied author's connection to underground political movements, or the fact that the novel was written by a convicted political criminal).

Thus, the performativity of the novel's metadiegetic prolepses served both practical and conceptual purposes, simultaneously warning the reader of the dangers of authoritative interpretations and delivering a didactic message in an efficient and playful way.

3.2. Unreliable Metadiegetic Narrator and His Narrattees

The preface introduces a self-conscious narrator who will remain a main agent of metanarrative throughout the novel. In his various roles, the narrator features in transgressive conversations with the perspicacious reader, in the metaleptic scenes involving Rakhmetov and in the novel's ambivalent final chapter. Unlike the narrator in Pisemskii's *Vzbalamuchenoe more*, who introduces himself as 'Monsieur Pisemskii',[82] the narrator in *Chto delat'?* is an amalgam of its creator's current and future selves. The presently incarcerated literary critic, novelist and social commentator addresses his loyal readers throughout the novel while his future self, freed from incarceration, appears only in the last chapter.

The narrator made several references that make it possible to identify him with the biographical author, Nikolai Chernyshevskii. In the chapter describing the narrator's meeting with the character Rakhmetov, the narrator notes that he is a

[82] A. F. Pisemskii, *Polnoe sobranoe sochinenii*, 8 vols (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo tovarishchestva A. F. Marks, 1910-1911), IV: *Starcheskii grekh. Bat'ka. Vzbalamuchennoe more. Russkie lguny. Ocherki* (1910) [henceforth *Vzbalamuchennoe more*], p. 429.

useful person for a young radical to know.[83] Later on, discussing Vera's desire to become a medic he reminisced about a fire that he helped to put out as a child.[84] Both of these remarks referred to Chernyshevskii's own position in society and incidents from his own childhood, even if the narrator is never identified by name in the final version of the novel.

Initially, however, Chernyshevskii gave the narrator his own name, 'Nikolai'. He then changed the name to 'Vladimir', and finally settled on no name at all. The draft of the first chapter lists among other characters ('Действующие лица в рассказе'): 'лицо, рассказывающее [Николай] Владимир Петрович Турчинов'.[85] In the scene of the narrator's meeting with Rakhmetov, he is referred to mysteriously as 'Mr. N.' [г. N.]. This progression of changes suggests that Chernyshevskii saw the character partly as his alter ego but did not want to make the connection between himself and the narrator of his text too explicit.

Ontologically, the narrator occupies a transgressive position of a character who is anchored in reality outside of the fictional text, features in the text, but also exists in the realm of fictional projections into the future. Even though at first he appears in the guise of a conventional omniscient narrator, this figure's ontological ambivalence, put forward in the preface in such a bold way, is retained throughout the text of the novel through the device of narratorial asides.

Following immediately after the preface, the first chapter 'Жизнь Веры Павловны в родительском семействе' sets a date for the beginning of the novel

[83] 'Я был тогда уже не молод, жил порядочно, потому ко мне собиралось по временам человек пять-шесть молодежи из моей провинции. Следовательно, я уже был для него человек драгоценный…'. Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?,* p. 208.

[84] Ibid., p. 265.

[85] Ibid., p. 345.

(1852, sometime before the unspecified date when the narration itself commences). Describing Vera's neighbours, the narrator briefly notes 'Кто теперь живет […] в квартире направо, я не знаю…', only to disappear again for the next few chapters. In chapter 7 he reappears, professing his allegiance to one of character's style of speech: 'подобно Жюли, я люблю называть грубые вещи именами грубого и пошлого языка'.[86]

The first of the authorial intrusions quoted above would not stand out to Chernyshevskii's contemporaries. Indeed, similar asides, indicating the presence of an omniscient narrator, proliferate in the works of mid-nineteenth-century writers of various ideological persuasions, from Goncharov and Turgenev to Pisemskii and Gertsen. The second aside, however, is indicative of a specific role the narrator would play at a later stage in Chernyshevskii's novel.[87]

Soon after the narrator admits his propensity for rude expressions, he recalls the promises made in the preface, once again warning the reader about the kind of narrative he is offered:

> Если бы я хотел сочинять трескучие столкновения, я б и дал этому положению трескучую развязку; но ее не было на деле; если бы я хотел заманивать неизвестностью, я бы не стал говорить теперь же, что ничего подобного не произошло; но я пишу без уловок и потому вперед говорю: трескучего столкновения не будет, положение развяжется без бурь, без громов и молний.

[86] Ibid., p. 37.

[87] In Mieke Bal's classification, the narrator in *Chto delat'?* can be categorized as 'explicit': 'a story teller, a visible, fictive 'I' who interferes in his/her account as much as s/he likes, or even participates as a character in the action. Such an explicit narrator is a specific version of the narrator, one of the several different possibilities of manifestation.' Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 17-18.

Here, the narrator purports to follow a particular style of storytelling to which he pledged himself when launching his narrative. Its main purpose is to be true to life, because the truthfulness of the story compensates for its artistic imperfections. The disgraceful tricks have only been used at the beginning to lure the reader in. Now, the story will be told exactly as it happened and no manipulation of the reader's attentions and sympathies will occur. Moreover, the narrator promises that in the future the story will unfold with minimum dramatic effect.

By explaining his actions in advance, the narrator aims to transform the reader from a passive recipient of the text into its active interpreter. It's not a coincidence, that he next addresses the reader in a companionable, almost conspiratorial way:

> Читатель, ты, конечно, знаешь вперед, что на этом вечере будет объяснение, что Верочка и Лопухов полюбят друг друга? – Разумеется, так.[88]

The narrator is thoughtful and caring ('Я обо всем предупреждаю читателя…')[89] and there is no hidden meaning in his words:

> Я не из тех художников, у которых в каждом слове скрывается какая-нибудь пружина, я пересказываю то, что думали и делали люди, и только; если какой-нибудь поступок, разговор, монолог в мыслях нужен для характеристики лица или положения, я рассказываю его, хотя бы он и не отозвался никакими последствиями в дальнейшем ходе моего романа.[90]

In fact, the events in the novel resolve themselves in a most melodramatic fashion when Vera and Lopukhov elope and marry in secret, and so the reader's

[88] Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?*, p. 54.

[89] Ibid., p. 99.

[90] Ibid.

expectations are betrayed. Chernyshevskii thus creates an original type of an unreliable narrator, whose unreliability manifests itself not in the usual untruthful representation of the events. Rather, it lies in his readiness to test the boundaries and ultimately betray the unspoken rules of the narrator/audience relationship that had been established at the outset of the narrative. He is not unreliable in what he tells, but unreliable in how he promises to deliver this information. The narrator breaks almost all the promises he made, purposefully jolting the readers out of interpretative complacency and drawing their attention to the mechanics of narrative manipulation. As a result, in *Chto delat'?* 'the narration itself – its difficulties, its liability to be subverted by one's own interests and prejudices and blindness – becomes part of the subject'.[91]

The narrator consistently emphasises the difference between facts and their interpretation. Chapter 1 starts with a description of the contested ownership of the apartment block where Vera's parents live. According to the sign on the building, it belongs to one Storeshnkov, but in fact it is his widow, who actually owns the entire building.[92] In his meeting with the narrator, Rakmetov asks for Mr. N's help with some unnamed underground activity but Mr. N refuses because that is 'simply not what he does'. Rakhmetov then calls Mr. N a liar and the narrator admits in hindsight that indeed he was 'forced to say not what he believes' [говорил ему не то, что думал].[93] These constant discrepancies between what things are what they look like urge the readers to remain vigilant towards multiple possible interpretations of the events.

[91] H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 69.

[92] Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?*, p. 15.

[93] Ibid., p. 210.

Throughout the novel, metanarrative is used to discuss the type of text the narrator is presenting to his audience. A type of an interpretative commentary on the unfolding narrative runs through the novel, uniting the narrator and the readers in a companionable 'we': 'как встретилось это доказательство, мы сейчас увидим',[94] 'мы видели, как устроились отношения между ними', 'мы видели перед собой', 'посмотрим, какие разницы обнаружатся',[95] etc.). This commentary keeps up the interpretative rhetoric of Chernyshevskii's journal articles but it also maintains open the channel of communication between the narrator and the reader.

Aside from the narrator, the preface also introduced his addressees and interlocutors – an implied audience. This implied audience consisted of three different types of readers: a perspicacious male reader [проницательный читатель] (the narrator's antagonist), ordinary male and female readers [читатель, читательница] (open to the narrator's arguments), and, finally, 'the reading public' [читающая публика] for whose benefit the narrative is put together and with whose opinion the narrator is most concerned. The division into these groups was, with rare deviations, sustained throughout the entire novel, but the preface itself focussed specifically on further sub-categorisation of readers: dividing them into female [читательница] and male [читатель].

Ever since Nikolai Karamzin asserted that sophisticated literary discourse should emulate the speech of society ladies and aim to have them as readers,[96] the

[94] Ibid., p. 65.

[95] Ibid., p. 150.

[96] N. M. Karamzin, 'Otchego v Rossii malo avtorskikh talantov?', in *Izbrannye sochineniia*, 2 vols (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1964), II: *Stikhotvoreniia. Kritika. Publitsistika. Glavy iz "Istorii Gosudarstva Rossiiskogo"*, pp. 183-87. On Karamzin's ideas of language reform, see B. M. Uspenskii, 'Iazykovaia programma N. M. Karamzina i ego storonnikov', in *Kratkii ocherk istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka (XI-XIX vv.)* (Moscow: Gnozis, 1994), pp. 150-56.

image of the female reader has gained particular significance in Russian literary polemics. This issue became even more prominent in the 1860s when the debates around The Woman Question, carried out on the pages of the influential Russian thick journals, diverted attention to the literary aspects of the female emancipation movement.[97]

The gendered nature of the discussion of types of readership in the preface was further exacerbated by the fact that 'audience' [публика] in Russian is a feminine noun. The dialogue therefore turns, naturally, into that of a male writer and his female addressee. The intuitive but sometimes naïve and easily distracted female reader was juxtaposed to the male reader who is arrogant and prone to erroneous judgements. Most importantly, this split in the novel's 'audience' [публика] evoked the division of the public into conservatives and progressists, outlined in the opening sequence 'The Fool'. The reasons for which the male reader was mocked in the preface are also reminiscent of the earlier passage: just as the servants of the hotel cannot make any sense of the story without the official version of the narrative provided by the police officer, the reader 'knows only what is said to [him]' [знаешь только то, что тебе скажут].[98]

The reading public has a typically female literary taste for engaging narratives, but most importantly, it lacks proper aesthetic judgement. The narrator's main problem with his reading public's incompetence lies in its inability to distinguish between aesthetically pleasing texts that reflect reality and artless texts that aim only for verisimilitude. Thus, the discussion of the issue of 'artistic talent' in the preface

[97] For an overview of contemporary debates about the female readers and writers see Dmitrii Ravinskii, 'Pisatel'nitsy o chitatel'nitsakh: zhenskoe chtenie na stranitsakh russkoi zhenskoi prozy XIX veka', in *Zhenskii vyzov: russkie pisatel'nitsy XIX-nachala XX veka*, ed. by Elisabeth Cheauré and E. N. Stroganova (Tver': Liliia Print, 2006), pp. 51-61.

[98] Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?*, p. 12.

introduced the contested aspect of Chernyshevskii's aesthetic theory of realist fiction – the paradox of mimetic verisimilitude.

Chernyshevskii's arrogant narrator easily antagonises contemporary readers and critics. However, read in the historical and political context of the novel's publication, the rhetoric of the preface comes across not just derisive, but also cautionary. The narrator, echoing the point of the novel's introductory chapter, scolds the readers for being too naïve in presuming the benevolent agenda of the source from which a narrative originates:

> …сам ты ничего не знаешь, не знаешь даже того, что тем как я начал повесть, оскорбил, унизил тебя. Ведь ты не знал этого, – правда? – ну, так знай же![99]

This unsophisticated rhetorical trick guaranteed that the every reader would count herself a part of the privileged minority rather than the despised majority. In addition, these insistent warnings to the reader drew attention to the public's susceptibility to ideological manipulation through narratives, including those of literary fiction. Thus, the abuse of the unsuspecting reader functions, in fact, as a symbolic representation of the dangers that a lack of awareness of any narrator's agenda could bring.

Couched in the terms of an ironic dialogue with the readers, the preface plays out Chernyshevskii's inner conflict of compromising literary aesthetics in order to put forward his own agenda. The narrator communicates the author's anxiety about going against his own better aesthetic judgement to reach a wider public that usually does not engage with sophisticated literary texts. Having 'low opinion' and being

[99] Ibid.

'angry' at the readers' base tastes, Chernyshevskii did not have any illusions as to the amount of dry moralizing the public can take in. In his articles, he repeatedly stated (following Belinskii) that the reading public is the real arbiter of literary success and the real guide to its development: 'Власть публики в литературных делах всесильна. Чего хочет публика, тем и бывает литература.'[100]

Concluding the preface, the narrator states:

> Есть в тебе публика, некоторая доля людей, – теперь уже довольно значительная доля, - которых я уважаю. [...] Но с ними мне не нужно было объясняться. Их мнениями я дорожу, но я вперед знаю, что оно за меня. Добрые и сильные, честные и умеющие… [Вы] недавно начали возникать между нами, но вас уже не мало, и быстро становится все больше. Если бы вы были публика, мне уже не нужно было бы писать; если бы вас еще не было, мне еще не было бы можно писать. Но вы еще не публика, а уже вы есть между публикою, – поэтому мне еще нужно и уже можно писать.[101]

Indeed, explaining his views to like-minded supporters did not present a challenge to someone as well trained in political discussion as Chernyshevskii was by 1863, at the pinnacle of his journalistic career. A traditional interpretation of this passage in the criticism on Chernyshevskii explains it by asserting the author's

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[100] N. G. Chernyshevskii, 'Ocherki gogolevskogo perioda russkoi literatury', in *PSS*, III (1947), pp. 5-309 (p. 305). In the same article, Chernyshevskii elaborated: 'Условия, от которых зависит дальнейшее развитие русской литературы... лежат в публике […] Литература может вызывать публику к умственной деятельности, но не может ни заменить собою публику, ни существовать без поддержки со стороны публики' (ibid., pp. 304-5); 'Публика должна сознать свои права на литературу, и тогда литература пойдет вперед. Без того все успехи литературы случайны и непрочны' (ibid., p. 306); 'От вас, читатель, зависит развитие русской литературы: выразите непреклонную волю вашу, чтобы она развивалась, и только тогда будет она иметь возможность развиваться.' (ibid., p. 309).

[101] Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?*, p. 14.

awareness of the censor and the need to 'smuggle out' the true content of his novels to the readers.[102] I would argue that, perhaps more importantly, the preface demonstrated Chernyshevskii's awareness of the rules he had to obey to retain the reader's favour.

As a utilitarian and a materialist, committed to the ideals of Enlightenment,[103] Chernyshevskii saw nothing wrong in using a work of literature as a means to a didactic end. At the same time, as a publicly recognized authority on contemporary literature, he was uneasy about the compromises required to cater for the tastes of a general reading public. In his opinion, he had to 'humiliate himself' by submitting his writing skills to the requirements of an accessible narrative:

> Ты, публика, добра, очень добра, и потому ты неразборчива и недогадлива.[...] Не осуждай меня за это, - ты сама виновата; твоя простодушная наивность принудила меня унизиться до этой пошлости.[104]

Despite being repulsed by the literary vulgarities, Chernyshevskii has a clear idea how to use them:

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[102] For example, Lunacharskii's seminal article on Chernyshevskii mentions the 'black bear of censorship', that made it impossible for Chernyshevskii to make his point directly. See A. V. Lunacharskii, 'Chernyshevskii kak pisatel'' in *Stat'i o literature* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), pp. 204–36 (p. 216).

[103] For more on Chernyshevskii's ties to the European Enlightenment, see N. M. Belova, *Roman N. G. Chernyshevskogo "Chto delat'?"' i prosvetitel'skaia literatura XVIII veka* (Saratov: Izdatel'stvo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1994); V. F. Pustarnakov, 'N. G. Chernyshevskii kak vyrazitel' tipichno prosvetitel'skoi kontseptsii sootnosheniia poznavatel'nogo i tsennostno-otsenochnogo i prosvetitel'skogo antistsientizma', in *Filosofiia prosveshcheniia v Rossii i vo Frantsii: opyt sravnitel'nogo analiza* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk, Institut filosofii, 2002), pp. 174-7; James P. Scanlan, 'Chernyshevskii and Rousseau', in *Western Philosophical Systems in Russian Literature: A Collection of Critical Studies*, ed. by Anthony M. Mlikotin (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1979), pp. 103-19.

[104] Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?*, p. 13.

> Я употребил обыкновенную хитрость романистов: начал повесть эффектными сценами, вырванными из средины или конца ее, прикрыл ее туманом. [...] На тебя нельзя положиться, что ты с первых страниц можешь различить, будет ли содержание повести стоить того, чтобы прочесть ее… [...] … я должен был забросить тебе удочку с приманкою эффектности.[105]

Now that the readers' interest had been captured, the story could go on for its original purpose – to dispel confusion and teach a lesson:

> 'Не будет ни эффектности, никаких прикрас. Автору не до прикрас, добрая публика, потому что он все думает о том, какой сумбур у тебя в голове, сколько лишних, лишних страданий делает каждому человеку дикая путаница твоих понятий'.[106]

Later on in the novel, its self-reflexive hero Rakhmetov, describing the turn the story had taken, would lament the fact that 'вместо простых разговоров самого спокойного содержания вышла раздирательная мелодрама'.[107] Despite the fact that 'the novel during the nineteenth century [...] still maintained an unembarrassed relation to popular entertainment',[108] Chernyshevskii was palpably resentful about the fact that he had to present his educating story in a ruse of a 'stupid melodrama' [глупая мелодрама], full of 'torments over trifles and catastrophes over nonsense' [мученья из-за пустяков и катастрофы из-за вздора].[109]

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[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., p. 13.

[107] Ibid., p. 227.

[108] Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1976), p. x.

[109] Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?*, p. 227.

Most of the narrator's dialogues with his multiple narrattees centered on precisely the same problem of aesthetic compromise. It was, however, his transgressive interactions with his usual addressee, the perspicacious reader, that truly upset the novel's ontological unity.

3.3. The Perspicacious Reader Metalepses

The figure of the perspicacious reader is integral to the novel's overall structure, as well as to the functioning of metanarrative in *Chto delat'?*. The novel's ontological ambiguity rests on multiple transgressions of ontological levels, or metalepses, and a significant number of those involve the narrator's interaction with his preferred narrattee.

The 'perspicacious sort of reader' [проницательный сорт читателей] first appears early in the novel, in one of the first descriptions of the representatives of 'the strange young people' [странная молодежь], Lopukhov and Kirsanov. In this scene, the young doctors discuss how best to help their new female friend, Vera, without once discussing whether she is attractive. Prone to misinterpreting what he reads, this reader thinks the new people strange and uninterested in aesthetics, misunderstanding their preoccupation with Vera's well-being rather than her beauty. In order to draw attention to his characters' support for ideas of female emancipation, Chernyshevskii emphasises their attitude to Vera as a fellow human being rather than an attractive woman.

As integral as the introductory chapters of the novel for plot development, this scene is equally symbolic: it touches on the main argument of contemporary debates of literary aesthetics, the confrontation between the 'realist' and 'aesthetic' critics. Representing the 'majority of professional litterateurs' [большинство записных

литературных людей] and 'aesthetic litterateurs' [эстетические литераторы],[110] the perspicacious reader is immediately styled as the narrator's ideological adversary.

Throughout the novel, the perspicacious reader continues to reprsent all the 'литераторы и литературщики',[111] a class of people who know their own mind and are unlikely to change it. 'Ну, бог с тобою, как знаешь, ведь тебя ничем не урезонишь',[112] notes the resigned narrator. As an adversary of both the narrator and the 'new people', the perspicacious reader has a remarkable double among the novel's characters: Vera's mother, Maria Alekseevna.

Maria Alekseevna's role in the novel is significant: she is a catalyst of most of the events in the first part of the novel. In addition, she is a concrete embodiment, a personification of the 'Old People' from whom Vera, Lopukhov, Kirsanov, Rakhmetov and their friends aim to distinguish themselves.

Maria Alekseevna is often mentioned in self-conscious authorial asides. Discussing her powers of reasoning, the narrator sarcastically notes: 'будто учила логику, которую и я учил наизусть'.[113] The scenes, featuring Maria Alekseevna, are usually accompanied by a commentary on the style in which they are narrated: the fact they resemble a farce ('походят на фарс')[114] is out of the narrator's control ('решительно против моей воли')[115], despite the danger they pose of turning the narrative into a vaudeville ('придает этой части романа водевильный характер'). The reason for the inclusion of these scenes, the narrator maintains, is to convey the

[110] Ibid., pp. 77-78.

[111] Ibid., p. 146.

[112] Ibid., p. 200.

[113] Ibid., p. 67.

[114] Ibid., p. 71.

[115] Ibid., p. 72.

events exactly as they happened no matter how much that might compromise an overall artistic value of the work:

> Но я рассказываю дело не так, как нужно для доставления мне художнической репутации, а как оно было. Я как романист очень огорчен тем, что написал несколько страниц унижающихся до водевильности.[116]

By this point, an attentive reader will have noticed that the narrator's claims are not to be trusted. The narrator's running commentary in these scenes is emphasised by the direct interpretative rhetoric. The descriptions of events are accompanied by a number of statements such as: 'принимаюсь объяснять';[117] 'говорю в оправдание';[118] 'не шутя говорю';[119] 'выражаю свое уважение, прославляю',[120] etc.

At one point, the narrator initiates a brief but direct dialogue with Maria Alexeevna:

> – Довольны ли вы, Марья Алексеевна?
>
> – Что, батюшка мой, мне быть довольной-то? Обстоятельства-то мои плоховаты?
>
> – Это и прекрасно, Марья Алексеевна.[121]

Ontologically transgressive (the author is talking to his own character), this dialogue is reminiscent of the conversations the narrator often holds with his

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid., p.72.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid., p. 120.

[120] Ibid., p. 149.

[121] Ibid., p. 114.

adversary, the perspicacious reader. In fact, it appears that Maria Alekseevna and the perspicacious reader share a common feature: both are representatives of the old, un-enlightened and non-progressive people. The style of the dialogues with the perspicacious reader often veers towards conversational, with refrains and a specific colloquial rhythm.[122] This type of language is used to present Maria Alekseevna's speech, too. Of all the characters, Maria Alekseevna comes closest to being the embodiment of the implied perspicacious reader. Her relationship with Vera and Lopukhov becomes, in effect, a micromodel of Chernyshevskii's relationship with an ideal censor, firmly backwards looking but easy to fool.

Maria Alekseevna is very traditional, even conservative, and so is the perspicacious reader. His political views are not discussed openly, but are inferred from the role he plays in the narrative. For example, when the perspicacious reader appears in the text, disrupting the story line, he is seen as a suspicious intruder and an uninvited observer. Sometimes the dialogue is inbuilt into the narrative without identifying the addressee, whose interference is nonetheless identified as obstructive:

> Полезная для проницательного читателя беседа о синем чулке, то есть о нем, оторвала меня от рассказа о том, как теперь проходит день Веры Павловны. "Теперь" – это значит, когда ж? да когда угодно с той поры, как она поселилась в Сергиевской улице, и вот до сих пор. А впрочем, что ж и продолжать это описание.[123]

[122] See, for example, the following passage: 'Они даже и не подумали того, что думают это; а вот это и есть самое лучшее, что они и не замечали, чт думают это. А впрочем, не показывает ли это проницательному сорту читателей (большинству записных литературных судий показывает – ведь оно состоит из проницательных господ), не показывает ли это, говорю я, что Кирсанов и Лопухов были люди сухие, без эстетической жилки?'. Ibid., p. 77.

[123] Ibid., p. 270.

The characters of the novel and its implied readers are able to decode the novel's actual message with varying degrees of success. Throughout the text, Chernyshevskii constructs a sophisticated hierarchical system of the characters' and readers' ability to interpret the events that happen on both sides of the ontological divide. In one of the novel's most humorous passages, Maria Alekseevna and Storeshnikov completely misinterpret the titles of the books that Lopukhov has brought for Vera.[124] Whereas Maria Alekseevna's ignorance remains static, Vera gains more insight the closer she is drawn to the New People. At first, she also interprets Lopukhov's words about his fiancé in a conventional way, but having read the books he supplied her with, she is able to see though his metaphors. In Chernyshevskii's understanding, the spititual and political development of an individual is seen partly as a process of honing skills of effective interpretation.

Similarly, the perspicacious reader, styled as the narrator's adversary, is unable to interpret the events of the novel. He is stubbornly, hopelessly ignorant, even though he thinks himself to be a connoisseur of the arts. Even when the 'general public', amenable to narrator's arguments, can be trusted to understand the text on its own, the perspicacious reader needs further clarifications.[125] He is, however, cunning and suspects that he is not told everything there is to know: for example, after Rakhmetov is introduced, the perspicacious reader suspects that the narrator has ties with other political radicals.[126]

Another typical representative of the older generation, Maria Alekseevna, misinterprets most of what happens to Vera in the first chapter of the novel, even though she is suspicious that she is being fooled. Her daughter Vera, as the readers

[124] Ibid., p. 66-67.

[125] Ibid., p. 12.

[126] Ibid., p. 213.

are constantly reminded, is not particularily special, and neither is the general reading public.[127] Thus, the contrast between Vera and her mother on the level of the system of characters is echoed in the contrast between the general public and the perspicacious reader on a level of novel's implied readers. The continuous use of the same device, metalepsis, draws the attention to this structural parallel.

The perspicacious reader is the narrator's persistent addressee:

> Однако же, как мы с проницательным читателем привязаны друг к другу. Он раз обругал меня, я два раза выгнал его в шею, а все-таки мы с ним не можем не обмениваться нашими задушевными словами; тайное влечение сердец, что вы прикажете делать![128]

Echoing the dialogue quoted above, perspicacious reader gains his own voice in the chapter following Rakhmetov's introduction. In this instance, just like Maria Alekseevna, the perspicacious reader engages in a direct dialogue with narrator. An illusion of the perspicacious reader's autonomy is created and sustained: his judgements appear to be not just separate but contrary to the narrator's. This conflict plays out in a revealing conversation about the details of Lopukhov's fake suicide:

> Теперь проницательный читатель уже не промахнется в отгадке того, кто ж это застрелился. 'Я уже давно видел, что Лопухов', говорит проницательный читатель в восторге от своей догадливости. Так куда ж он девался и как фуражка его оказалась простреленною по околышу? 'Нужды нет, это все шутки его, а он сам себя ловил бреднем, шельма', ломит себе

[127] 'Воспитание Веры Павловны было очень обыкновенное. Жизнь ее […] представляла кое-что замечательное, но не особенное. А в поступках ее уже и тогда было кое-что особенное.' Ibid., p. 15.

[128] Ibid., p. 268.

проницательный читатель. Ну, бог с тобою, как знаешь, ведь тебя ничем не урезонишь'.[129]

The perspicacious reader's bad literary and artistic taste or, sometimes, a complete absence thereof, is ridiculed throughout the novel. In *Chto delat'?*, the inability to make 'correct' aesthetic judgements is equal to a lack of an enlightened political judgement: 'Уж очень плох ты, государь мой, в эстетических рассуждениях, которые так любишь…'[130]; 'Очень же плох ты, государь мой, по части соображений о том, что думают порядочные люди…'.[131]

The ideological conflict between the narrator and the perspicacious reader reaches its climax in a scene of direct discursive confrontation. Finally, the narrator can no longer tolerate the reader's ignorance and tries to dispatch him altogether. In the novel's most ontologically transgressive scene, the perspicacious reader once again interrupts the flow of the narrative with his unwanted comments:

> А я знаю... Что это? знакомый голос... Оглядываюсь... так и есть! он, он, проницательный читатель, так недавно изгнанный с позором за незнание ни аза в глаза по части художественности; он уж опять тут, и опять со своею прежнею проницательностью, он уж опять что-то знает! – А! я знаю, кто писал... Но я торопливо хватаю первое, удобное для моей цели, что попалось под руку, – попалась салфетка, потому что я, переписав письмо отставного студента, сел завтракать – итак, я схватываю салфетку и затыкаю ему рот: "Ну, знаешь, так и знай; что ж орать на весь город?" [132]

[129] Ibid., p. 200.

[130] Ibid., p. 228.

[131] Ibid., p. 229.

[132] Ibid., p. 243.

The comic effect here is achieved, as often before in the conversations with the perspicacious reader, through a mix of colloquial and literary language. This passage presents a complete ontological break, a metalepsis. The narrator, interrupted during the physical act of writing, interacts with an imagined reader of his text. The napkin, stuffed in the reader's mouth, is left over from narrator's breakfast, which he had straight after copying Lopukhov's letter. The letter itself is quoted in full just before this passage, which creates an illusion of immediacy in this transgression of ontological levels.

This metaleptic exchange continues a few pages later, when the perspicacious reader frees himself from the constraints of the napkin. He continues to protest, arguing with the narrator about the characters' behavior and morality:

> Проницательный читатель уж успел опростать свой рот от салфетки и изрекает, качая головою:
>
> – Безнравственно!
>
> – Молодец! угадал! – похваляю я его: – ну, порадуй еще словечком.
>
> – Да и автор-то безнравственный человек, – изрекает проницательный читатель: – вишь, какие вещи одобряет.
>
> – Нет, мой милашка, ты ошибаешься. Я тут многое не одобряю. Пожалуй, даже все не одобряю, если тебе сказать по правде. Все это слишком еще мудрено, восторженно; жизнь гораздо проще.
>
> – Так ты, значит, еще безнравственнее? – спрашивает меня проницательный читатель, вылупив глаза от удивления тому, до какой непостижимой безнравственности упало человечество в моем персонаже.

– Гораздо безнравственнее, – говорю я, неизвестно, вправду ли, насмех ли над проницательным читателем.

The irony in this passage, as before, is centered on the unreliability of the novel's narrator. Despite all the mocking that the perspicacious reader receives for his backward aesthetic preferences, the events of the novel unfold precisely in a way that this type of reader would expect. The demands of the accessible and entertaining narrative prevail over the narrator's own preference for dense realist description. The narrator's ambivalent opinion of his own role in relating this story is expressed in the last line, which leaves the question of the narrator's reliability open.

The perspicacious reader is constantly proven wrong, sometimes via a simple two-step rhetorical strategy. First, the narrator creates the illusion of agreement with the perspicacious reader but then proves him wrong. An example of such strategy is a discussion about blue stockings, in which the narrator creates the impression that he is discussing Vera. In the middle of the discussion, the narrator turns the insult around by attacking the perspicacious reader to prove that one can be a bore and a nitwit irrespective of gender.[133]

The device of the free indirect speech that is used for the perspicasious reader throughout the novel (with the exception of the direct dialogical confrontations) interestingly mirrors the use of this device elsewhere in the text. Chernyshevskii used free indirect speech liberally if not excessively both as a means of characterization and psychological insight as well as for comic effect. Widespread use of this narrative technique also provides a fluid focalisation pattern that allows for a seamless change of the point of view. Thus, the use of free idirect speech allows the reader to encounter and understand now the point of view of the narrator, now the

[133] Ibid., p. 268-70.

characters sometimes even the perspicacious reader's points of view without perceiving a break of the diegetic unity of the text.

Acting as the narrator's interlocutor and functioning as an object of ridicule, the figure of the perspicacious reader is not as one dimensional as it seems. The analysis of the metalepses in which this figure features demonstrates that he bears the weight of the majority of the ontological breaks in the texts, as well providing Chernyshevskii with an extra focaliser alongside the narrator and the characters.

In the final scene of the novel, 'Peremena dekoratsii', the figure of the perspicacious reader is used one last time to bring the ontological ambiguity of the text to the fore. Relating the story of a seemingly innocent summer outing in 1865, the chapter features 'a lady in mourning' [дама в трауре] and 'a man of about thirty years old' [мужчина лет тридцати]. Introduced at the very end of the novel, these figures enjoy an intentionally ambivalent ontological status.

Over the years, the scholars have built various elaborate hypotheses according to which this lady in morning represents Chernyshevskii's wife, Ol'ga Chernyshevskaia, to whom the novel is dedicated.[134] If this interpretation is followed through, the man who joins the lady in mourning on her trip to the shopping gallery, would be none other but Nikolai Chernyshevskii himself. The action of this last chapter takes place two years in the future in 1865, two years after the summer party, described in the previous chapter, a time when Chernyshevskii's trial would have come to an end.

As has been noted above, throughout the novel the persona of the narrator does not steer too far from the biographical persona of the implied author, Nikolai

[134] 'Посвящается моему другу О.С.Ч.' Ibid., p. 7.

Chernyshevskii. The narrator presents himself also as a writer, a successful, respected professional. He is older than the New People but he socializes in the same circles as Lopukhov and Kirsanov, and knows them well. He is familiar with their way of life and customs, enjoys their trust and attempts to relate their story accurately and without bias.

Major ontological transgressions in the novel happen in the scenes of the narrator's engagement with the figure of the perspicacious reader, who personifies the conservatives among the novel's implied readers. In these scenes, free indirect speech assigned to the figure of the reader becomes direct dialogue, and a discursive confrontation takes place.

In the final scene of *Chto delat'*?, a similar confrontation takes place, when the narrator engages in another direct dialogue with an unhappy reader, unconvinced by this bold description of the events that have not yet happened. This brief, final conversation with the readers (both perspicacious adversaries and trusting supporters) at the very end of the novel's text is significant structurally, discursively and metaphorically. In this scene, political, social and narrative upheaval all reach their climax. A political change that made the release of the prisoner possible is celebrated in a society of young people, the kind of which has never been seen before: they flaunt social conventions, exchange partners and involve women in productive, if small scale, industrial activity. In a manner similar to mediaval utopias, the narrative achieves an apocalyptic canrvialesque climax where all the rules are broken; the narrator tells of the events that have not yet happened, the characters meet their creator the author; the past meets the future.

Throughout the novel, the transgression of ontological levels in *Chto delat'?* is intentionally noticeable for the reader, jolting him out of the experience of a realist

narrative into an acknowledgement of the ease with which any story and its reception can be manipulated. The introduction in the last scene of two characters, who, like the narrator, exist on both ontological planes (both in the novel and in the reality it portrays), maintains this ontological confusion until the last lines of the text.

The role of the perspicacious reader in the novel is, thus, at least two-fold. On the one hand, as the narrator's preferred narratee, this figure serves as a rhetorical tool of breaking through and transgressing the ontological levels of the text. The frame-breaking metalepses, such as the one in which the narrator assaults the reader with a napkin, form the core of the most overly metafictional moments of the novel.

On the other hand, in many cases, the perspicacious reader stands in for the novel's most demanding implied reader – the government censor. Ironically, the historical circumstances of the novel's famously miraculous passing (almost uncensored) through a number of government agencies indicate the success of Chernyshevskii's chosen technique. An unsophisticated rhetorical trick – a continuously staged confrontation between the narrator and the perspicacious reader – encouraged the readers to distance themselves from the perspicacious reader's opinions. This, in turn, ensured that the interpretational model offered by the narrator overrode other, more subversive, readings of the text.

3.2. The Rakhmetov Metalepsis

Even though the ontological discrepancies are evident in Chernyshevskii's treatment of all of his characters, nowhere are they more prominent than in the parts of the text that feature Rakhmetov. Rakhmetov is first mentioned in the novel as a minor character, one of Lopukhov's friends who visit his and Vera's house during

their marriage. He is described as 'horrible' [ужасный][135] and unfriendly. After Lopukhov's staged suicide, Rakhmetov reappears to comfort Vera and offer inspiring advice.

Chapter 9 'Osobennyi chelovek' relates the story of Rakmetov's life and includes one of the novel's most interesting metalepses – the story of narrator's meeting with Rakhmetov. Chernyshevskii clearly anticipated that an introduction of a minor character into a story that had previously centered on Vera Pavlovna's life might seem arbitrary to his readers. Hence, the re-introduction of Rakhmetov in this chapter is followed by no fewer than two additional chapters in which the 'introduction of the character' [введение действующего лица][136] is debated and discussed in detail.

Rakhmetov belongs to a select group of people of a 'particular breed' [люди особой породы][137] whom the narrator knows personally, a 'living proof' [живое доказательство] that the new kind of people can come from a traditional background. Chernyshevskii here uses a particular strategy of authentication typical for a realist narrative where an existence and, even more importantly, verisimilitude of a particular character is proved and enhanced by an eye-witness testimony provided by the most reliable source in a fictional universe – the narrator. Cosidering that by now the readers have been deceived by the narrator multiple times, the use of this strategy emphasises not just the unreliability of this particular account, but also the questionable nature of the overall claims of authenticity that are typical for realist narratives in general. In order to grant the character necessary ontological autonomy, in this chapter the narrator emphasises Rakhmetov's special status by discursively

[135] Ibid., p. 198.

[136] Ibid., p. 228.

[137] Ibid., p. 202.

downplaying the subject-object opposition typical for the narrator-character relationship.

First, the narrator effaces his own singularity. Throughout the character's introduction the narrator keeps referring to himself as a part of the larger group, 'our circle' [наш кружок], as he calls it. The rhetorical entity of the first person singular ('я') gently mocks the outstanding people he met and then seamlessly transforms into 'мы' of Rakhmetov's admirers:

> 'Над теми из них, с которыми я был близок, я смеялся…. Я люблю смеяться над такими людьми … […] И знали мы, что наш знакомый Рахметов проживает в год рублей 400. […] Наш Рахметов из какой-нибудь захиревшей и обеспоместившейся ветви Рахметовых …[…] Никто из нас не знал, что у него не 400, а 3 000 рублей дохода…'[138]

The narrator first encounters Rakhmetov as another member of Lopukhov's and Kirsanov's friendship circle and offers an account of this meeting: 'Тот из них, которого я встретил в кругу Лопухова и Кирсанова и о котором расскажу здесь…'[139]; 'Вот, например, мое знакомство с ним'.[140] Remarkably, this first confrontation can be read as a reverse metaphor of an author's relationship to his character:

> Через минуту Рахметов сел прямо против меня, всего только через небольшой стол у дивана, и с этого-то расстояния каких-нибудь полутора аршин начал смотреть мне в лицо изо всей силы. Я был раздосадован: он рассматривал меня без церемонии, будто перед ним не человек, а портрет,

[138] Ibid., pp. 203-204.

[139] Ibid., p. 202.

[140] Ibid., p. 208-11.

– я нахмурился. Ему не было никакого дела. Посмотревши минуты две-три, он сказал мне: “г. N., мне нужно с вами познакомиться. Я вас знаю, вы меня – нет…”.

The usual balance of narrative power here is subversively undermined: the character approaches the narrator as a ‘portrait’ [портрет] rather than a ‘human’ [человек], as well as having the advantage of already knowing about his existence but remaining himself unknown. This mimics the position in which characters stand in relation to their narrators, of whom they are presumably unaware despite the fact that the narrators are privy to their characters’ most intimate thoughts.

The chapters following the account of the narrator’s meetings with Rakhmetov explain the reasons for the character’s introduction into the narrative in which he had not featured before and will not feature further. This explanation is effected through a device of initiating a dialogue with the ‘perspicacious reader’, familiar to the readers from the preface.

Rakhmetov, the narrator explains, is described in great detail because otherwise the reader would not know that such people could exist – the reader’s imperfect vision would not let him recognize such outstanding specimens. Moreover, Rakhmetov’s sudden appearance as a ‘main’ [главный] character is misleading, as he will not play an important role in the novel’s plot. A subtle discoursive metalepsis is exercised here through a zeugma of ‘leaving the room’ and ‘leaving the story’:[141]

[141] Chernyshevskii often uses zeugmas for comic effect. For an analysis of a large array of rhetoric devices used in *Chto delat’?* for comic effect, see B. I. Lazerson, ‘Ironiia v publitsistike N. G. Chernyshevskogo’, in *N. G. Chernyshevskii: Stat’i, issledovaniia i materialy*, ed. by E. I. Pokusaev (Saratov: Izdatel’stvo Saratovskogo universiteta, 1958), pp. 272-335.

…когда Рахметов, поговорив с Верою Павловною, уйдет, то уже и совсем он уйдет из этого рассказа, и что не будет он ни главным, ни неглавным, вовсе никаким действующим лицом в моем романе…[142]

In this passage, the terms of the narrator/reader relationship are dramatically emphasized. The narrator 'tells' and 'describes' ([скажу, расскажу, опишу, рассказ, описание]): in a six hundred word passage these verbs and derivatives occur no less than eighteen times. Whereas the readers 'see' ([видеть, видать, увидеть], used six times). This emphasis on the visual character of the reader's perception is fully in tune with the novel's continuous metaphor of performativity and spectacle, reflected in the chapter headings and authorial asides. Here, it is realised on the level of metanarrative, giving the readers instructions not only about how to interpret the offered narrative but specifying the means through this interpretation has to be carried out.

The visual aspect of the reader's interaction with the text is further explored through the use of typography in a manner reminiscent of Laurence Sterne. The reader is invited to make his own guess about the artistic reasons behind the introduction of Rakhmetov as a character:

Зачем же он введен в роман и так подробно описан? Вот попробуй, проницательный читатель, угадаешь ли ты это? А это будет сказано тебе на следующих страницах […] так это я скажу тебе в конце главы, **угадай-ко** теперь, что там будет сказано: **угадать нетрудно**, если ты имеешь хоть малейшее понятие о **художественности,** о которой ты так любишь толковать, – да куда тебе! Ну, я подскажу больше чем половину разгадки: Рахметов выведен для исполнения главнейшего, самого

[142] Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?*, p. 215.

коренного требования **художественности,** исключительно только для удовлетворения ему; ну, ну, **угадай хоть** теперь, хоть теперь-то **угадай**, какое это требование, и что нужно было сделать для его удовлетворения, и каким образом оно удовлетворено через то, что показана тебе фигура Рахметова, остающаяся без всякого влияния и участия в ходе рассказа; **ну-ко, угадай**. Читательница и простой читатель, не толкующие о **художественности**, они знают это, а попробуй-ко угадать ты, мудрец. **Для того и дается тебе время, и ставится, собственно, для этого длинная и толстая черта между строк: видишь, как я пекусь о тебе. Остановись-ко на ней, да и подумай, не отгадаешь ли.**[143]

The passage concludes with a short thick line, a common text paragraph divider sign in publications at that time. In the next paragraph, conventional storytelling is resumed: 'Приехала Мерцалова, потужила, поутешала…'.[144] (Fig.2). The hypertrophied orality of the narrator's chant engages the reader verbally, whereas his visual engagement is maintained through the use of unsophisticated but cunningly used graphic means.

[143] Ibid., p. 215-16. The use of bold is mine.

[144] Ibid., p. 216.

сказа;—ну-ко, угадай. Читательница и простой читатель, не толкующіе о художественности, они знаютъ это, а попробуй-ко угадать ты, мудрецъ. Для того и дается тебѣ время, и ставится собственно для этого длинная и толстая черта между строкъ: видишь, какъ я некусь о тебѣ. Остановись-ко на ней, да и подумай, не отгадаешь ли.

Пріѣхала Мерцалова, потужила, поутѣшила, сказала, что съ радостью станетъ заниматься мастерскою, не знаетъ, съумѣетъ ли, и опять стала тужить и утѣшать, помогая въ разборкѣ вещей. Рахметовъ, попросивъ сосѣдскую служанку сходить въ булочную, поставилъ самоваръ, подалъ, стали пить чай; Рахметовъ съ полчаса посидѣлъ съ дамами, выпилъ пять стакановъ чаю, съ ними опросталъ половину огромнаго сливочника и съѣлъ страшную массу печенья, кромѣ двухъ простыхъ булокъ, служившихъ фундаментомъ: «имѣю право на это наслажденіе, потому что жертвую цѣлою половиною сутокъ». Понаслаждался, послушалъ, какъ дамы убиваются, выразилъ три раза мнѣніе, что «это безуміе»—то есть, не то, что дамы убиваются, а убить себя, отъ чего бы то ни было, кромѣ слишкомъ мучительной и неизлечимой физической болѣзни или для предупрежденія какой нибудь мучительной неизбѣжной смерти, напримѣръ колесованія; выразилъ это мнѣніе каждый разъ въ немногихъ, но сильныхъ словахъ, по своему обыкновенію, налилъ шестой стаканъ, вылилъ въ него остальныя сливки, взялъ остальное печенье,—дамы ужь давно отпили чай,—поклонился и ушелъ съ этими матеріалами для финала своего матеріальнаго наслажденія опять въ кабинетъ, уже вполнѣ посибаритствовать нѣсколько, улегшись на диванѣ, на какомъ спитъ каждый, но который для него нѣчто уже въ родѣ капуанской роскоши. «Имѣю право на этотъ праздникъ, потому жертвую 12-ю или 14 часами времени». Кончивъ матеріальное наслажденіе, возобновилъ умственное—чтеніе комментарія на апокалипсисъ. Часу въ 9-мъ, пріѣхалъ полицейскій чиновникъ сообщить женѣ застрѣлившагося дѣло, которое теперь уже вполнѣ было разъяснено; Рахметовъ сказалъ, что жена ужь знаетъ, и толковать съ нею нечего; чиновникъ былъ очень радъ, что избавился отъ раздирательной сцены. Потомъ явились Маша и Рахель, началась разборка платья и вещей: Рахель нашла, что за все, кромѣ хорошей шубы, которую она не совѣтуетъ продавать, потому что черезъ три мѣсяца

Fig.2 *Sovremennik*, p. 504.

A comparison with the draft version of the novel reveals that Chernyshevskii significantly expanded this passage in the final version of his text.[145] The earlier version has no examples of repetition, neither of the verbs nor the commands to the readers, which makes it an aesthetically smoother but rhetorically weaker version of the same text. The draft also contains no graphic interaction with the reader. It seemed that the changes were aimed at intensifying the reader's involvement with the text.

The discussion of Rakhmetov's worth for the current narrative is continued in the following chapter 'Beseda s pronitsatel'nym chitatelem i izgnanie ego'. In this chapter, debating the necessity of introducing Rakhmetov as a character morphs into a discussion what a character is: an agent of action, the voice of judgment, or an agent of truth. Offering contrary opinions, the narrator and the reader resume the ongoing discussion of aesthetics in general and the function of literary fiction. Thus, an issue of plot and character development becomes a pretext for a wider discussion of the nature and purposes of literary fiction.

The narrator and his addressees, various types of readers, act as two sides in an argument on literary realism and the authenticity of portrayed events and characters. The reader's supposition that Rakhmetov is introduced as an agent of action (he brings Vera a note from Lopukhov) is counteracted by the narrator's assertion that this is not Rakhmetov's primary function. The reader's assumption that Rakhmetov is introduced to pass a judgement on Vera and her friends is also refuted by the narrator's claim that this is not what the rules of art demand. The reason for his introduction, the narrator finally reveals, is to follow the first rule of art: to represent things in such a way so that the readers could imagine them exactly as they are:

[145] For the same passage in the pre-publication draft, see ibid., p. 585.

> Первое требование художественности состоит вот в чем: надобно изображать предметы так, чтобы читатель представлял себе их в истинном их виде.[146]

So it follows, that the character of Rakhmetov is introduced to provide the reading public with another example if a 'New Man'. At this point of the chapter, the narrator's playful tone becomes serious, and, most importantly, his addressee changes from the reader to the public:

> Ну, слушай же. Или нет, не слушай, ты не поймешь, отстань, довольно я потешался над тобою. Я теперь говорю уж не с тобою, я говорю с публикою, и говорю серьезно.[147]

This change exposed the true purpose of this argument: to draw the readers' attention to the degree of verisimilitude in the portrayal of the novel's various characters. The novel's didactic message demanded a certain degree of authenticity in terms of the events that it related. At the same time, the manner of the narrator's argument with his addressees ensured his monopoly on the correct 'reading' of these characters and events, that needed to be communicated to the general reading public, whose interpretative apparatus was deemed, for now, to be inadequate. It was for the benefit of the public that the epic 'larger than life' character of Rakhmetov's illuminated the characters of Vera, Lopukhov and Kirsanov, and made them look not 'idealised, perhaps even improbable' ['лицами идеализированными, пожалуй лицами даже невозможными в действительности'].[148]

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[146] Ibid., p. 231.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid., p. 232.

Introducing Rakhmetov in these chapters, Chernyshevskii triggered a meta-literary discussion of the text's aesthetics and structure. Aside from debating the principles of character description, it resurrected debates on aesthetics, including on aspects of imagery, plot and narrative dynamics, all of which were initiated in the novel's preface.

3.3. Metaleptic System of Characters

Beginning in the preface, the novel's ontological ambiguity is purposefully maintained throughout the text, particularly through the uncertain ontological status of the novel's characters, including the narrator.

The draft version of the novel contains, towards the end, a passage in which the narrator unequivocally claims that he is recounting the stories of 'factual new people'.[149] No such note remains in the final version of the text, where the ontological status of the characters is left deliberately ambiguous, leading the readers to believe that the new people of the novel could equally be either real or fictional figures. The elimination of this note is purposeful. The carefully maintained ambiguity of the novel's ontological status does not only concord with Chernyshevskii's general philosophical agenda, but it is also a typical rhetorical modus operandi that he used throughout his earlier writings. Had the passage remained in the final version of the novel, it would have functioned as a final rhetorical bookend for the narrator's dialogue with his readers in the preface.

The passage in question follows the announcement of Lopukhov's (now called 'Beaumont') wedding to Katerina Polozova and the admission that the two families have become very close and would now be friends for a long time. Judging by its

[149] Ibid., pp. 712-14. This piece of the novel's draft only became widely available to scholars after 1975, when it was published in the academic edition of the novel. This explains the fact that it is rarely referred to in the bulk of the Soviet criticism on the writer published before mid-1970s.

position in the draft text, this lengthy passage, discussing real 'facts' behind the novel's plot, has been substituted in the final published version by this note:

> Живут ладно и дружно […] Но из этого еще не следует, чтобы мой рассказ о них был окончен, нет. […] Я еще имею рассказать о них много, и ручаюсь, что продолжение моего рассказа о них будет гораздо любопытнее того, что я рассказывал о них до сих пор.[150]

The original passage raises several issues that are of crucial importance for understanding Chernyshevskii's own view of the ontology of his narrative.

Firstly, the narrator of this passage states that the text he offers to the reader is not a novel ('я не имею претензии писать роман') but rather a story about one of his good friends ('просто рассказываю о жизни одной из моих добрых знакомых и людей, к ней близких').[151] Since real life does not abide by the laws of literature, he claims, the story needы to be brought to an end, even if, by novelistic standards, it has reached its climax and does not require further elaboration.

Secondly, the narrator feels the need to clarify exactly what has been artistically invented and what has been copied from reality in his story: '… мне нужно объясниться с публикою о том, до какой [степени] участвовали в моем рассказе вымысел и многое [ли] в нем изменено против того, как было на самом деле'.[152]

He then proceeds to explain that even though the names of his characters are fictional, they are in fact real people, and the events they live through have also actually happened at some point in the past ('факты, пережитые моими добрыми

[150] Ibid., p. 334.

[151] Ibid., pp. 712-13.

[152] Ibid., p. 713.

знакомыми'). These facts, however, had to be embellished: 'Я для тебя должен был завить и закудрявить простой ход дела, потому что тебе он показался бы уже слишком прост, то есть, по-твоему, груб, прозаичен, безнравственен'.[153] Having explained himself, the narrator concludes the passage with a promise to finish the story.

The omission of this passage in the final version of the novel is partly a result of Chernyshevskii aiming for more stylistic and rhetorical finesse. Sequential comparison of the draft to the finished text shows that the majority of changes that Chernyshevskii made were clarifications and intentional blunting of the most direct arguments. It is also a further indication of Chernyshevskii's continuing preoccupation with the dilemma of didacticism and realist representation: the constant negotiation between the degree of truthfulness and aesthetics in a didactic text.

The argument, started in the preface, continues with a question: is the main purpose of art to represent reality as truthfully as possible or is it allowed to augment reality so that the didactic effect is heightened? In this passage, Chernyshevskii states clearly that the story is presented in the form of a novel to educate its readers, and so both the events and the characters are embellished for effect. They need, however, also to be realistic to be believable as role-models. The truncated version of the above passage that has survived into the novel's final version, omits this explanation. Instead, it promotes an intentional ontological ambiguity that affords ample opportunity for metanarrative and ontological frame-breaking and particularly metalepsis.

[153] Ibid.

The novel's subtitle *Iz rasskazov o novykh liudiakh* clearly indicates that the story is told mainly to introducing its characters. The problem of establishing their historical authenticity has spawned an entire sub-industry in Chernyshevskii's studies.[154] One of the reasons why the issue has attracted so much attention during the years is the intention ambiguity the text itself promotes. The passage from the novel's draft, quoted above, is a literary mystification, as it has now been established that Chernyshevskii did not have any actual prototypes for his characters. According to Reiser, he might have been inspired by the biographies of people he knew but even in this case they would have resembled his characters much less than the passage suggests.

So are Vera Pavlovna, her friends and the *osobennyi chelovek* Rakhmetov portrayed as real people whose story is told by the narrator, who personally knows them, or are they framed as purely fictional characters invented in order to tell an edifying story? The narrator's position on that varies throughout the novel.

On the one hand, he claims is telling the story of an actual woman, Vera Pavlovna Rozal'skaia, with her explicit permission: 'я потому и рассказываю (с ее согласия) ее жизнь…'.[155] On the other hand, throughout the novel the narrator converses with his characters (Vera,[156] or her mother, Maria Alexeevna[157]), negotiating with them their role in the narrative's progression. Similarly, the stories of the New People often are claimed to be accounts of the true events.[158] Throughout the text the narrator makes sure the reader does not forget that he personally met the people he is describing: when Vera is reading Lopukhov's letters, the narrator tells us

[154] For more on this, see Reiser, 'Nekotorye problemy izucheniia romana "Chto delat'?"', pp. 819-33.

[155] Chernyshevskii, *Chto delat'?*, p. 47.

[156] Ibid., p. 59-61.

[157] Ibid., pp. 113-14.

[158] Ibid., p. 61.

he is by now used to the antics of 'these people', having spent a lot of time in their company.[159] However, at the same time, the New People are described as 'types' [типы] with 'typical features' [все резко выдающиеся черты их – черты не индивидуумов, а типа].[160] Even the 'outstanding man' [особенный человек] Rakhmetov is described as a representative of a wider community of unusual people.[161] Alongside the narratorial asides and multiple metalepses, these constant oscillations in the characters' ontological status maintain the intentional ontological ambiguity that becomes one of the defining features of the novel.

4. Conclusion

The close reading of the novel's metafictional passages, offered in this chapter, demonstrates the remarkable prominence of metanarrative in *Chto delat'?*. The novel's metadiegetic prolepses, unreliable narrator, the delicate balance of multiple narrattees, as well as the continuously maintained ambiguity of its characters' ontological status, aid the creation of a sophisticated metafictional text that questions its own functions in the process of performing them.

Introducing multiple narrattees, as well as exploiting typography to emphasise the ontological ambiguity of his texts, Chernyshevskii used narrative techniques that would have been familiar to him from the works of Laurence Sterne and Henry Fielding. In an innovative way, he adapted these techniques for the purpose of reflecting on current debates on politics and the aesthetics of realist fiction. Indeed, Chernyshevskii turned to metafiction as the most suitable means of communicating

[159] Ibid., p. 243.

[160] Ibid., pp. 148-50; 202.

[161] 'Таких людей, как Рахметов, мало: я встретил до сих пор только восемь образцов этой породы (в том числе двух женщин)…'. Ibid., p. 202.

his publicly stated philosophical concern with the ontology of literary fiction to a wider audience that the readers of his critical articles.

The immense body of scholarship on Chernyshevskii, including detailed structuralist analyses of the figure of the narrator, implied author and various types of historical and implied readers, has been acknowledged in my study. Taking into account recent advances in the field of Chernyshevskii studies, my aim was to focus on how Chernyshevskii's use of metanarrative, particularly metalepsis, in *Chto delat'?* affected the novel's structure, system of characters, and plot dynamic.

I suggest that the novel's neglected introductory passage, along with the much studied preface, function as explanatory metadiegetic prolepses, offering readers a model of interpretative effort that would be required from them throughout the text. From the introductory chapters onwards, his readers are constantly reminded of the dangers of discursive manipulation; both explicitly, in the narrator's asides, and implicitly, by being confronted with the narrator's unreliability. Since the narrator *Chto delat'?* consistently breaks the promises he makes in his metaliterary observations, I argue that Chernyshevskii's text features an unusual type of unreliable metadiegetic narrator.[162]

Starting with the novel's preface, the narrator's self-reflexive commentary establishes a 'direct causality between the events of the metadiegesis and those of the diegesis, conferring on the second narrative an explanatory function'.[163] The metaphor of theatrical performance, running from the opening scene through the entire novel, performes a similar function, subtly reminding the readers about the difference between reality and its artistic representation. The ability to distinguish

[162] For the exploration of a notion of a 'metadiegetic narrator' and other forms of second-degree narratives see Genette, *Narrative Discourse,* pp. 232-34.

[163] Ibid., p. 232.

between the two is repeatedly shown to be necessary for making a sound political and aesthetic judgement. The perspicacious reader, for instance, who is unable to tell bad art from good, is equally hopeless in the matters of recognizing the progressive ways of the New People. This ongoing narrative self-reflection is performed alongside more overt instances of metanarrative in the novel, such as the frame-breaking metalepses of the dialogues with the perspicacious reader.

The ontological ambiguity merges the planes of the implied author and the narrator, creating an illusion of Chernyshevskii's presence in his own story. By employing the narrator as an eye-witness, Chernyshevskii lends the story further credibility, as do narrator's multiple references to events that were similar to what had happened in Chernyshevskii's life. The state of ontological confusion is purposefully maintained throughout the text, as demonstrated by my analysis of the ontological status of not just the narrator and his addressees, but also of the novel's characters, the Old and the New People. In this way, Chernyshevskii's main preoccupation in the sphere of aesthetic theory – the ontology of literary fiction – found its way into his own literary practice.

The readers of thick journals would have been able to recognize the narrative voice of *Chto delat'?* as Chernyshevskii's familiar discoursive manner, as practiced in his role as *Sovremennik*'s leading literary critic. The interpretative rhetoric of journal articles is carried over into the literary text of Chernyshevskii's novel, offering a running commentary on the unfolding events of the plot. Ultimately, *Chto delat'?* provides the reader with a critical apparatus needed to decode its own text.

In *Chto delat'?*, the narrator engages with his addressees in various ways, from staging direct rhetorical confrontation in dialogue, to internalizing their free indirect speech into his own statements. The novel's implied audience, broadly divided into

supporters and adversaries, beccomes the narrator's interlocutor, participating in the debates on the aesthetics of realist narrative. In my analysis, I have argued that the narrator's patronizing attitude to his narrattees owes more to Chernyshevskii's unease about the aesthetic compromise he had to resort to in his novel than to his actual contempt for his implied audience.

Since the narrator is constantly present in the text, the external focalisation of the third person omniscient narrator (typical for realist prose of the period) is continuously compromised. Instead, Chernyshevskii imports into his novel the rhetorical type of internal focalisation that he used as a journalist and editor. Often, potentially metaleptic scenes, such as the narrator's direct appeals to his characters, are impossible to categorise in terms of focalisation because they have been dramatised as dialogues. The narrator's conversations with Vera, Maria Alekseevna or Rakhmetov, as well as his arguments with the perspicacious reader, are presented as dialogues – the ultimate dramatic symbiosis of showing through telling. Thus, the focalisation also reflects the merging of the literary and publicistic discoursive.

Most of the narratorial asides in the novel explore issues of literary aesthetics, but it is the narrator's conversations with the adversarial perspicacious reader that demonstrate the novel's use of metanarrative at its best. My reading of the passages featuring the perspicacious reader aimed to establish the function of this figure that went beyond his role as the narrator's addressee and a sounding board for his ideas. On several occasions, the perspicacious reader is addressed as if he were present during the act of the text's composition or were able to influence the development of the plot by voicing his opinion. These interactions transgress the barriers between the ontological levels of the text, shattering the novel's mimetic and diegetic unity.

With the help of metanarrative, *Chto delat'?* offered a general commentary not just on literary aesthetics but also on the ontology of novelistic form, testing out various types of relationship between literary fiction and objective reality.

Chapter Two

Conservative Metafiction: Aleksei Pisemskii's *Vzbalamuchennoe more*

1. Introduction

Vzbalamuchennoe more (1863) by Aleksei Pisemskii, once an incredibly popular and now an almost forgotten nineteenth-century writer, had a tumultuous history of changing positions in the Russian literary canon. Torn from the literary and historical context of the 1860s, it seems to be a tendentious and aesthetically imperfect piece of prose that could have slipped out of the canon for these reasons alone. Perhaps not surprisingly for such a polemical work, the novel's fate has been determined primarily by its author's political views. *Vzbalamuchennoe more* was twice deemed ideologically unsound: first, by Pisemskii's contemporaries (it offended both the conservatives and the radicals since it depicted both in an unflattering light) and, the following century, by Soviet critics, who thought it too reactionary and therefore harmful for Pisemskii's already shaky reputation. Its function in the twentieth-century Russian literary canon was all but eliminated: the novel was excluded from the most recent collection of Pisemskii's works.[1]

Pisemskii's current position in the Russian literary canon is that of a secondary playwright, not quite as prominent as his *Moskvitianin* journal colleague Aleksandr Ostrovskii. Pisemskii's plays remain a part of nineteenth-century drama syllabi in

[1] The 1959 edition follows the other two posthumous editions of Pisemskii's collected works, A. F. Pisemskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 24 vols (St. Petersburg: Vol'f, 1895); A. F. Pisemskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 8 vols (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo tovarishchestva A. F. Marks, 1910-11). *Vzbalamuchennoe more* is Pisemskii's only major prose text that is excluded from the 1959 Soviet edition (A. F. Pisemskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 9 vols (Moscow: Pravda, 1959)). Marks's 1910-11 edition was the last edition of *Vzbalamuchennoe more* in Imperial Russia and the USSR. Currently, the novel is available as a print-on-demand book (<http://www.ozon.ru/context/detail/id/6595184/> [accessed 05 August 2016]). An academic edition of the text is a work in progress at SPbGU.

Russian universities, but, as a prose writer, he is seen as a marginal figure on the late-nineteenth-century literary scene.[2] This, however, was not always the case.

A sought-after writer during his lifetime,[3] Pisemskii had the misfortune of having had such literary giants as Turgenev, Goncharov, Dostoevskii and Tolstoi as his contemporaries. However, Pisemskii's plays and novels enjoyed an unambiguous popularity and brought him financial stability at a time when only a handful of writers could support themselves solely through literature.[4]

Pisemskii's fame was great but fleeting. When his first novella, *Tiufiak,* was published in *Moskvitianin* in 1850, it was an instant success. Mikhail Pogodin signed him up to publish all his further texts in the same journal and bought the rights to a future collected works. Editors Andrei Kraevskii and Adal'bert Starchevskii invited him to publish in *Otechestvennye zapiski* and *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*. Soon afterwards, in 1851, Pisemskii published his next novel,[5] *Bogatyi zhenikh*, in

[2] See, for example, L. A. Anninskii, *Tri eretika* (Moscow: Kniga, 1988), p. 14: 'Сломленный, низвергнутый, отброшенный, он закатился во второй ряд русской классики', as well as A. V. Timofeev, 'Aleksei Feofilaktovich Pisemskii', in *Istoriia russkoi literatury XIX veka. 70-90-e gody*, ed. by L. D. Gromova, V. N. Anoshkina and V. B. Kataev (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo MGU, 2001), pp. 216-46; or Victor Terras, 'The Realist Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Classic Russian Novel*, ed. by Malcolm V. Jones, Robin Feuer Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 190-210 (p. 208).

[3] 'До первых годов шестого десятилетия в течение пяти-шести лет Писемский пользовался самой большой популярностью. Он сделался достоянием Петербурга жил бойко, редакторы журналов за ним ухаживали, его видали часто и в светских салонах, знали как чтеца и даже как актера-любителя.' P. D. Boborykin, 'Pamiati Pisemskogo', in *Literatura i zhizn'* <http://dugward.ru/library/pisemskiy/boborykin_pamyati_pisemsk.html> [accessed 07 August 2016].

[4] Pisemskii's spacious house in Moscow was bought from the proceeds of his novels. Parts of the house were named after the novels that financed them: the house itself after *Vzbalamuchennoe more* and the two wings after *Liudi sorokovykh godov* and *V vodovorote.* For more on Pisemskii's finances, see Sergei Plekhanov*, Pisemskii* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1986), p. 222.

[5] Pisemskii's early prose exercises approached a novelistic form, at least in length, in *Bogatyi zhenikh* (1851-1852) or *Boiarshchina* (1844). However, *Tysiacha dush* has traditionally been identified as his first full-length novel. For more on suggested periodization of Pisemskii's prose see: P. G. Pustovoit,

Sovremennik. The year 1853 saw the publication of his collected works in three volumes, just three years after his debut.

By 1856, he was enough of an established writer to be invited to join an official expedition to the Caspian Sea organised by the Naval Ministry; in 1857 he became an editor of *Biblioteka dlia chteniia, Sovremennik*'s closest rival. The publication of *Staraia barynia* in 1857 drew Chernyshevskii's attention and praise. In 1858 Pisemskii published *Tysiacha dush*, his finest and most accomplished novel, to universal acclaim.[6] Finally, in the early 1860s, at the high point of his literary career, Pisemskii's play *Gor'kaia sud'bina* won (jointly with Ostrovskii's *Groza*) the prestigious Uvarov drama prize from the Academy of Sciences.

Pisemskii's success did not last. When he started at *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* in 1857, he worked as an editor under Aleksandr Druzhinin. In 1860, Druzhinin retired and Pisemskii gained full control of the journal. As a declaration of intent, he published an aesthetic and political programme for the journal (*Ob izdanii zhurnala 'Biblioteka dlia Chteniia' v 1861 godu*) and then illustrated it with a series of six feuilleton articles that were intended to promote the values of the 'pursuit of good', the 'unbiased examination of evil deeds' and the 'struggle for truth'.[7] In three articles

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A. F. Pisemskii v istorii russkogo romana (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo MGU, 1969), pp. 7-9; A. A. Roshal', *Pisemskii i revoliutsionnaia demokratiia* (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1971), pp. 5, 73; K. Iu. Zubkov, *Povesti i romany A. F. Pisemskogo 1850-kh gg.: povestvovanie, kontekst, traditsiia* (unpublished doctoral thesis, SPbGU, 2011), pp. 92-94.

[6] 'О таком романе, как "Тысяча душ", нельзя говорить вскользь и между прочим. По обилию и разнообразию явлений, схваченных в этом романе, он стоит положительно выше всех произведений нашей новейшей литературы.' D. I. Pisarev, 'Pisemskii, Turgenev i Goncharov (Sochineniia A. F. Pisemskogo, t. I i II. Sochineniia I. S. Turgeneva)', in *Sochinenii*a, 10 vols (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo F. Pavlenkova, 1894-1904), I (1894), pp. 437-80 (p. 480).

[7] These were outlined later, on the back of the first editorial, published at the end of the year. See A. F. Pisemskii, 'Ob izdanii v 1862 godu zhurnala "Biblioteka dlia chteniia" v 1861 godu', in *Pis'ma*, pp. 557-8.

signed by 'state councilor Salatushka' and another three signed by the 'old feuilleton horse Nikitushka Bezrylov',[8] Pisemskii attempted to launch a literary polemic against the major St Petersburg critics and publishers of the day. The articles managed to offend everyone, from Chernyshevskii and Nekrasov to Gertsen and Antonovich, through a series of highly insulting personal quips that had nothing to do with aesthetics or politics.[9] The first three pieces attacked bureaucracy and the radical intelligentsia, and the rest discussed questions of education for the poor, the emancipation of women and literary fundraisers.

Pisemskii most likely did not anticipate how violent a reaction the articles would provoke, but his reputation nevertheless took a blow from which it never recovered. The aftershocks were felt for a few years: in 1863 there were still publications mocking him for his misstep.[10] After the feuilleton affair, Pisemskii lost the support of the leading figures on the contemporary literary scene, especially those based in St. Petersburg and working for *Sovremennik.* In the wake of the scandal, he moved to Moscow to join Mikhail Katkov as a co-editor of the literary department at *Russkii vestnik*. A staunch conservative, Katkov was at that time slowly cultivating a circle of like-minded individuals around his Moscow journal.

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[8] 'Zapiski Salatushki. Mysli, chuvstva, vozrreniia, naruzhnost' i kratkaia biografiia statskogo sovetnika Salatushki' (1861); 'Fel'etony Nikity Bezrylova' (1861-1862); 'Oblichitel'noe pis'mo iz ada', 'Zaveshchanie moim detiam Vasiliiu i Nikolaiu' (1862).

[9] For more on this conflict see Charles A. Moser, 'Pisemskii's Literary Protest: An Episode from the Polemics of the 1860s in Russia', *Etudes slaves et est-européennes*, 8/1-2 (Spring-Summer) (1963), 60-72, as well as Maya Jenkins, *A Study of A. F. Pisemsky and His Fate in Russian Literature* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, University College, 1977), pp. 160-72; Pustovoit, *A. F. Pisemskii v istorii russkogo romana*, pp. 146-7.

[10] G. N. Zhulev, 'Gor'kaia sud'bina kota, ili legkaia boinia. Vzbalamuchennaia opera v neskol'kikh aktakh', *Iskra*, 4 (1863), 583. The main character in this parody on Pisemskii's award-winning play is called Nikitushka Bezrylov.

These were the circumstances in which Pisemskii's next novel, *Vzbalamuchennoe more,* was produced. The publication of such an openly polemical work so soon after the scandal did not revive Pisemskii's reputation; it ruined it completely. In his analysis of the situation, Moser suggests that the reason for Pisemskii's swift fall from grace was a case of betrayed expectations: since his most famous pre-1860 works had been critical of contemporary society and politics, the radical critics assumed that he would share their views. In fact, Pisemskii was anything but radical: even if he was unhappy with some elements of the existing system, a change of the political regime was the last thing he would advocate.

After his 1860s feuilleton articles and *Vzbalamuchennoe more* had made Pisemskii's position clear, the radical establishment turned on him. Pisemskii's career, according to Moser, could be seen as 'an unusually faithful microcosm of the nonradical writer's situation during these years'.[11] Indeed, Nikolai Leskov's career took a similar turn after Pisarev sharply criticized his novel *Nekuda* (1864) in an article of 1865, 'Progulka po lesam rossiiskoi slovesnosti'. The trajectory of Pisemskii's and Leskov's literary careers was part and parcel of the period of the long 1860s, when influential radical critics shaped the literary landscape.

In comparison, conservative views[12] did not harm Dostoevskii's literary career in the 1870s. When *Besy* came out in 1871-1872, the general mood in society was completely different: the prevailing attitude was that of disillusionment and even annoyance with the radicals, who, despite all the promises, seemed to not have achieved much over the decade. Pisemskii's pessimistic criticism of contemporary

[11] Charles A. Moser, *Pisemsky: A Provincial Realist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 93-94.

[12] For an overview of Dostoevskii's conservative opinions see L. P. Grossman, *Dostoevskii-reaktsioner* (Moscow: Common place, 2015).

society would not have been out of place then. However, back in the 1860s, Chernyshevskii's playful and hopeful novel was much more suited to the spirit of the decade.

Despite his fall-out with the critics, Pisemskii remained a strong presence on the contemporary literary scene: 1866 collection of Pisarev's critical articles opened with *Stoiachaia voda. Sochineniia A. F. Pisemskogo*, and featured two further articles *Pisemskii, Turgenev and Goncharov*, and *Zhenskie tipy u Goncharova, Pisemskogo i Turgeneva*[13] – a clear indication of Pisemskii's literary status at the time. Pisemskii's friends, Turgenev and Goncharov among them, continued to support him in correspondence, as well as in their reviews. Four more novels followed *Vzbalamuchennoe more*: *Liudi sorokovykh godov* (1869), *V vodovorote* (1871), *Meshchane* (1877), *Masony* (1880)). None, however, were as successful as Pisemskii's previous works.

When Pisemskii died in 1881, interest in his works had already been steadily declining for a decade. However, a number of biographical studies followed in the period 1884-1895, and one was published in 1909.[14] After a brief lull, a publication

[13] D. I. Pisarev, *Sochineniia*, 10 vols (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo F. Pavlenkova, 1866-1869), I (1866), pp. 3-80, 80-125.

[14] S. A. Vengerov, *Aleksei Feofilaktovich Pisemskii: Kritiko-biograficheskii ocherk* (Moscow: Tovarishchestvo M. O. Vol'f, 1884); A. M. Skabichevskii, *A. F. Pisemskii, ego zhizn' i literaturnaia deiatel'nost* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia tovarishchestva "Obshchestvennaia pol'za", 1894); V. V. Zelinskii, 'Aleksei Feofilaktovich Pisemskii, ego zhizn', literaturnaia deiatel'nost' i znachenie ego v istorii russkoi pis'mennosti: kritiko-biograficheskii ocherk', in A. F. Pisemskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 24 vols (St. Petersburg: Tovarishchestvo M. O. Vol'f, 1885), I (1885), pp. 15-107; O. F. Miller, 'A. F. Pisemskii', in *Russkie pisateli posle Gogolia: chteniia, rechi i stat'i*, 3 vols (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo tovarishchestva M. O. Vol'f, 1890-1906), I (1890), pp. 35-76; V. E. Cheshikhin-Vetrinskii, 'Aleksei Feofilaktovich Pisemskii', in *Istoriia russkoi literatury*, ed. by D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii (Moscow: Mir, 1909), pp. 232-52.

of Pisemskii's correspondence by M. K. Kleman and A.P. Mogilianskii in 1936 opened an era of Soviet scholarship on the writer.

Since studying ideologically unsound writers required justification, Soviet scholars developed several strategies to integrate Pisemskii into the canon. It became a commonplace in Soviet criticism to claim that he was in fact not as conservative as he might have appeared to his contemporaries.[15] Another way to justify studying Pisemskii was to emphasise his association with writers and critics with impeccable radical credentials, such as Pisarev, Nekrasov and Chernyshevskii. More rhetorical than factual, these interpretations paved the way towards the generally shared view that, even if neglected before ('cruelly ignored by literary criticism', as M. Kleman dramatically put it)[16], Pisemskii was a still a key player on the literary scene of the 1840–60s. Consequently, his novels were worth studying as part of the development of the Russian realist novel in the second half of the nineteenth century.

However, despite the work of a number of dedicated professional nineteenth-century Russian, Soviet and Western critics and scholars,[17] their critical output was

[15] 'Причиной невнимания к Писемскому явилось заблуждение некоторых современных писателю критиков, механически и предвзято распространивших отрицательную оценку публицистической деятельности Писемского шестидесятых годов и его антинигилистического романа "Взбаламученное море", на все художественное творчество писателя.' Pustovoit, *A.F. Pisemskii v istorii russkogo romana*, pp. 3-4. See also A. A. Roshal', *Pisemskii i revoliutsionnaia demokratiia*, pp. 5-6. This position was so well argued that it was adopted by critics outside of the USSR: see Jenny Woodhouse, 'A Realist in a Changing Reality: A. F. Pisemsky and *Vzbalamuchennoye more*', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 64 (1986), 489-505.

[16] 'А. Ф. Писемский принадлежит к числу авторов, жестоко обойденных литературной наукой.' This note comes from Kleman's introduction to a scholarly edition of Pisemskii's correspondence, published in 1936. With the publication of the last pre-revolutionary work on Pisemskii in 1909, this puts the period of 'cruel neglect' at about forty years. See: M. K. Kleman, 'Sud'ba literaturnogo naslediia Pisemskogo', in Pisemskii, *Pis'ma*, pp. 3-20.

[17] For an overview of early Soviet studies, see M. K. Kleman, 'Sud'ba literaturnogo naslediia Pisemskogo', pp. 3-20; as well as works such as A. A. Roshal', *Pisemskii i revoliutsionnaia demokratiia* (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe gosudarstevennoe izdatel'stvo, 1971), P. G. Pustovoit, *A. F.*

significantly smaller than that of Pisemskii's contemporaries. So central was his position on the literary scene and market that critics of virtually every ideological and aesthetic persuasion left an account, note or review of one Pisemskii's novels. These included writings by A. N. Ostrovskii, K. S. Aksakov, M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, A. V. Druzhinin, D. I. Pisarev, A. A. Grigor'ev, N.V. Shelgunov, to name a few. This has left the field of Pisemskii studies in a state of imbalance, where personal accounts and opinion pieces have prevailed over professional examination and expertise.

Recently, Pisemskii has enjoyed a modest surge of scholarly attention. This reflects a general revival of scholarly interest in the secondary figures of the nineteenth-century realist movement.[18] Contemporary scholars of Pisemskii's works, such as K. Zubkov, A. Timofeev, L. Siniakova, E. Kruglova, Iu. Frolova, E. Zaitseva, E. Pavlova and others have addressed the need to study literary figures from what we now perceive to be the fringes of the 1860s literary scene. They have also drawn attention to the importance of a narratological approach to texts that had

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Pisemskii v istorii russkogo romana (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo MGU, 1969); L. M. Lotman, 'A. F. Pisemskii', in *Istoriia russkoi literatury* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1982), pp. 203-31. Outside of Russia, Charles A. Moser's biography *Pisemsky: A Provincial Realist* (1969) and Maya Jenkins' *A Study of A. F. Pisemsky and His Fate in Russian Literature* remain the two most authoritative works on Pisemskii. A comprehensive bibliography of secondary literature on Pisemskii is available in Jenkins, ibid., pp. 401-32.

[18] A number of theses on Pisemskii have been defended in the last two decades. For a representative selection, see: K. Iu. Zubkov, *Povesti i romany A.F.Pisemskogo 1850-kh godov: povestvovanie, kontekst, traditsiia* (unpublished doctoral thesis, SpBGU, 2011), Iu. Iu. Frolova, *Poetika romana A. F. Pisemskogo "Tysiacha dush": khudozhestvennyi sintez realizma i sentimentalizma* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Voronezhskii gosudarstvennyi pedagogocheskii universitet, 2009); E. L. Zaitseva, *Poetika psikhologizma v romanakh A. F. Pisemskogo* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Rossiiskii universitet druzhby narodov, 2008); E. N. Kruglova, *Khudozhestvennaia pozitsiia A. F. Pisemskogo v literaturnom protsesse 1840-60-kh godov* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ivanovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2008); E. V. Pavlova, *Belletristika A. F. Pisemskogo 1840-1850-kh gg. i problema khudozhestvennogo metoda* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Pskovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2007).

previously been examined mostly from a historical point of view. Other topics of interest for contemporary scholars include the development of Pisemskii's artistic method in the context of the literary process of the 1840-50s, the specifics of psychological characterization in Pisemskii's prose, the synthesis of realism and sentimentalism in Pisemskii's novels, as well as a general contextualization of his prose in the literary history of the period.

The narratological focus of contemporary scholarship has led to a formal acknowledgement of the most original aspects of Pisemskii's style: his peculiar brand of literary realism and its manifestation in the unusual narrative structures of his prose pieces.[19] However, despite the recent academic focus on Pisemskii's idiosyncratic realism, aspects of metanarrative in his texts have passed almost unnoticed just as they did in the Soviet period.

A typical Soviet critical reading of Pisemskii's metanarrative can be found in P. Pustovoit's 1969 study *A. F. Pisemskii v istorii russkogo romana*. Pustovoit discussed the author's appearance as a character in his own fictional narrative, but only as a stylistic feature. The scholar examined the balance of objective and

[19] One of the recently defended PhD theses on Pisemskii, for example, suggested that he was a founder of a 'Russian strand of naturalism' that has developed independently of the French tradition. E. Kruglova argued that it was naturalistic poetics that influenced Pisemskii's style and the structure of his works the most. She read *Vzbalamuchennoe more* as a 'naturalist epic novel', using this hybrid definition to explain the idiosyncrasies of the novel's form. Another recent study of Pisemskii's literary views by E. V. Pavlova focused on his aesthetic method, defined as 'pure realism' [чистый реализм] and looked at the binary opposition of 'truth' [правда], 'common sense' [здравый смысл], sober gaze [трезвый взгляд] as opposed to 'lies' [ложь] and 'untruth' [неправда]. See E. N. Kruglova, *Khudozhestvennaia pozitsiia A. F. Pisemskogo v literaturnom protsesse 1840-60-kh godov. Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata filologicheskikh nauk* (Kostroma: Ivanovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2008), p. 17; E. V. Pavlova, *Belletristika A. F. Pisemskogo 1840-1850-kh gg. i problema khudozhestvennogo metoda: Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata filologicheskikh nauk* (Cherepovets: Pskovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2007), pp. 4, 5, 9.

subjective style of narration in Pisemskii's prose and defined the introduction of narrator/character as 'an open subjective device' [открытый субъективный прием]. The use of this device was explained through Pisemskii's 'pamphlet narrative intention' [памфлетная установка повествования] that ultimately led the author to the 'complete loss of objectivity […] and even hysterical cries and exclamations instead of a calm artistic representation of reality'.[20]

L. Siniakova, a leading contemporary Pisemskii scholar, approaches Pisemskii's narrative from a different perspective, but also does not engage with its metafictional potential. Her analysis of *Vzbalamuchennoe more* refers to instances of metanarration in the text as examples of the 'objectivisation of the author'. She cites Pisemskii's insertion of himself as a character as evidence of a desire to make the story 'as authentic as possible'. The 'Pisemskii-character', according Siniakova's interpretation, does not take any part in the events of the novel and only addresses the reader.[21] Siniakova argues that even though the 'publicistic' goals of the novel could explain the appearance of the author-persona in the text, Pisemskii had no aesthetic reason to 'resort' to this device. She believes that Pisemskii adopted this narrative strategy in order to absolve himself of accusations of conservatism: 'Pisemskii needed to explain to the readers at the time that he, a former editor of *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, sincerely wanted to make sense of changes in society'.[22] Another contemporary scholar, A. Timofeev states his chapter on Pisemskii only that 'the writer became a character in his own work',[23] without any further discussion of

[20] Pustovoit, *A. F. Pisemskii v istorii russkogo romana*, p. 167. Note the value judgment implicit in Pustovoit's remark.

[21] This is, in fact, incorrect: Pisemskii-character took part in the events in the novel, attending soirées, accompanying other characters on their walks and spying on them at the train station.

[22] L. N. Siniakova, *Kontseptsiia cheloveka v romanakh A. F. Pisemskogo 1860-1870-kh gg.* (Novosibirsk: Novosibirskii gosudarstvenyi universitet, 2007), pp. 70-72.

[23] A. V. Timofeev, 'Aleksei Feofilaktovich Pisemskii', p. 235.

this peculiarity. Kirill Zubkov's dissertation on Pisemskii's early prose demonstrated a similar approach. Acknowledging the fact that *Vzbalamuchennoe more* was not a typical realist novel, he briefly touched on the 'peculiar position of the narrator', who was 'apparently associated with the real author',[24] but left it at that.

In effect, Pisemskii's metanarrative techniques have remained unexamined in the critical literature. Moreover, the lack of attention to this issue has led to a continued misinterpretation of Pisemskii's style in general and key aspects of *Vzbalamuchennoe more*'s narrative structure in particular. Aiming to address this problem, in this chapter I discuss the historical circumstances in which *Vzbalamuchennoe more* was written, analyse Pisemskii's aesthetic views and ideas on realism, and, finally, offer a close reading of the novel's metafictional chapters.

2. Writing *Vzbalamuchennoe more*: Pisemskii in the 1860s

On 8 October 1862, Pisemskii wrote to his friend Pavel Annenkov, inviting him to a reading: 'Не приедите-ли послушать хоть частичку [романа], а также пригласите и ваших дам […], и когда нам можно будет сие совершить, известите меня – я поприглашу кой-кого и других на помощь моему авторскому разумению…'[25]

Pisemskii often arranged readings of his works-in-progress: as a passionate amateur actor, he liked holding his audience captive and enjoyed these occasions. In addition, readings served more utilitarian purposes, both as a part of his creative

[24] Zubkov, *Povesti i romany A. F. Pisemskogo 1850-kh gg*, p. 104. This is also not entirely correct: we only become aware of the fact that the narrator of the entire story is supposed to be Pisemskii-writer when he is introduced as Pisemskii-character. Before that the reader is only aware of the general omniscient narrator. Interestingly, Zubkov's manuscript offers an insightful analysis of Pisemskii's conflicting narrators in his other novels, *Tiufiak* (pp. 39-41) and *Tysiacha dush* (pp. 91-98).

[25] Pisemskii, 'Letter of 8 October 1862 to P. V. Annenkov', in Pisemskii, *Pis'ma*, pp.150-51.

process (a way of getting direct feedback) and as a networking opportunity. At a reading at the house of Minister of the Interior, P. A. Valuev on 2 April 1863, Pisemskii presented several chapters of *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, hoping to win the minister's approval. In a neat mise-en-abyme, there is a scene of a public reading in the novel itself.

A little less than a month later, on 1 November of the same year, Pisemskii contacted Boris Almazov to inform him that he was now working on something rather impressive:

> Я теперь пишу большой роман, который будет больше 'Тысячи душ'. Слушавшие его все очень хвалят, и он захватывает всю почти нашу матушку Русь; словом труд серьезной.[26]

At the time of its composition and afterwards, Pisemskii saw the strengths and 'seriousness' of his novel in its epic sweep and political impact. Indeed, despite the speed with which it was written ('ни одной из моих вещей […] я не писал с таким увлечением и так проворно, как этот роман'),[27] Pisemskii's 1863 piece was longer and had more of an epic scope than his earlier 1858 triumph *Tysiacha dush*.

Looking back on the composition of *Vzbalamuchennoe more* in 1878, he recalled writing a 'big novel' with a 'political meaning' that described the origins of nihilism in Russia.[28] In a letter to Turgenev of 1869, Pisemskii also emphasised the political message of the novel: he wanted *Vzbalamuchennoe more* to be translated so

[26] Pisemskii , 'Letter of 1 November 1862 to B. N. Almazov', Ibid., p.151.

[27] Pisemskii, 'Letter of 12/24 January 1863 to I. S. Turgenev', *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 73 (1964), 176.

[28] 'В 1863 году я опубликовал […] большой роман под заглавием "Взбаламученное море", имевший политическое значение ввиду зарождения в России нигилизма, который я описал.' Pisemskii, 'Letter of 3 November 1878 to A. de Gubernatis', in *Pis'ma*, p. 765.

that it was available to European readers. Describing 'contemporary Russia' [нынешняя Россия], the novel exposed 'our revolutionary party, the vilest and the worst party that the world has ever imagined'.[29]

The aim of the novel was made explicit in a note accompanying the copy given to the Tsar in 1864. Pisemskii stressed the fact that *Vzbalamuchennoe more* represented Russian society as truthfully as possible, including its 'false and fake' [лживые и фальшивые] aspects. The novel, according to Pisemskii, was intended to appeal to the Tsar's mercy for those who were in charge of the 'pseudo-revolution', but were more interested in big pronouncements than actions.[30]

Pisemskii wrote the bulk of his 'serious' novel in 1862, while arranging his move to Moscow. The timing is significant, as Pisemskii was exploiting readers' current interest in politics, already piqued at it was by the country's domestic and international troubles: civil unrest in the capital, the consequances of the implementation of the new property laws for peasants, as well as rising tensions between Russia and Poland. At the same time, he was genuinely interested in making a political statement, and, since he has been compromised as a 'publicist' in the course of the Nikitushka Bezrylov feuilleton affair, he turned to literary fiction as the next best medium to make his voice heard. In January 1863 Pisemskii resigned as an editor of *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* and accepted the post of director of the literary section at *Russkii vestnik*. The newly forged affiliation with Katkov's conservative journal must have been another impetus to make his views public.

[29] '… затем, чтобы в Европе явилась в истинном свете наша революционная партия, хуже и мерзей которой, я думаю, мир ничего не представлял.' Pisemskii, 'Letter of end of November/beginning of December 1869', *Literaturnoe nasledstvo,* 73 (1964), 183-84 (p.184).

[30] Pisemskii, 'Letter of 10 January 1864 to P. A. Valuev', in *Pis'ma*, pp. 164-165.

Pisemskii remained in Moscow for the rest of his life and, after his move, visited St. Petersburg only briefly: it became 'absolutely repugnant' to him in the aftermath of the feuilleton scandal. [31] The scandal started in December 1861 and culminated in March 1862, when the editors of *Iskra*, V. S. Kurochkin and N. A. Stepanov, challenged Pisemskii to a duel. He tried to arrange a public expression of support, but those he had considered his allies failed him.[32] Disillusioned and hurt, Pisemskii left for Europe, officially to visit his son, who was doing research at the University of Heidelberg. Pisemskii did not enjoy his trip, as evidenced in the few letters he sent home.[33] This dissatisfaction would later find its expression in the chapters of *Vzbalamuchennoe more* dedicated to the characters' travels in Germany, Switzerland, France, and England.

Another biographical event that found its way into the novel was that of Pisemskii's meeting with Gertsen on 19 June 1862.[34] Pisemskii and Gertsen disagreed in their views on Russian politics, and the meeting was not a success. As with Pisemskii's disagreement with the Russian radicals at home, the disastrous meeting added insult to injury and further accelerated his fall from grace. Not surprisingly, Gertsen, who was satirised in the novel, referred to it as 'stirred-up rubbish heap' [взболтанная помойка].[35] Pisemskii returned to Russia early in the autumn of 1862 and moved to Moscow in March or April 1863.

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[31] Pisemskii, 'Letter of 19 February/3 March 1863 to I. S. Turgenev', *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 73 (1964), 177.

[32] Pisemskii described this traumatic experience in his letter to I. S. Turgenev from February, 1862. Ibid.

[33] 'Я тащусь по Европе и пока кроме хлопот по дороге никаких еще особых удовольствий не получил.' Pisemskii, 'Letter of 10 May 1863 to A. A. Kraevskii', in *Pis'ma*, p. 150.

[34] For more on this meeting, see Moser, *Pisemsky: A Provincial Realist*, p. 120.

[35] A. I. Gertsen, 'Vvoz nechistot v London', *Kolokol*, 15 December 1863, p. 1442.

In addition to ideological and aesthetic concerns, Pisemskii was keen to ensure the commercial success of his novel during this difficult period. The repeated references to the novel in his correspondence reveal more than a simple desire to share the agonies and ecstasies of the creative process. Rather, he was aiming to orchestrate the publication of the novel before it had even been finished. Pisemskii was astute and even ruthless in handling the practical matters of getting his texts published, and, by this stage of his career, was not above selling his novel to the highest bidder. To this end, he was effectively publicizing the novel in his correspondence with editors and their de facto agents even before he had finished writing it,[36] It was in a similar spirit of practicality that Pisemskii referred to his text as 'big': he was not just warning his future readers about the epic scale of his work, but, on a rather mundane level, was also alerting the publishers to the fact that it would need to be published in instalments. Thus, the letters that started with an artistic discussion of the novel's scale often ended on a more practical note: 'На письмо это я просил бы тебя ответить, как и что они и желают-ли приобресть такую большую вещь'.[37] The same applied to the way Pisemskii described his novel in a letter to Katkov, dispatched the same day: 'я теперь пишу огромный роман (листов до 35 печатных)'.[38] From the very inception of *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, Pisemskii, a successful writer and professional editor, conceptualised the novel in the context of the contemporary literary process: politically and aesthetically, but also commercially.

[36] 'Я пишу, пишу мой роман, а сам еще и не знаю, что это такое?' Pisemskii, 'Letter of 8 October 1862 to P. V. Annenkov', in *Pis'ma*, p. 150; '…поэтому можешь судить, что ветрено и торопливо распорядится с таким трудом я не могу.' Pisemskii, 'Letter of 15 November 1862 to B. N. Almazov', in ibid., p. 153.

[37] Pisemskii, 'Letter of 1 November 1862 to B. N. Almazov', ibid., p. 151.

[38] Pisemskii, 'Letter of 1 November 1862 to M. N. Katkov', ibid.

Pisemskii would ideally have liked the novel to come out in *Russkii vestnik*, [39] but had earlier promised it to Mikhail Korsh at *Peterburgskie vedomosti*, who intended to publish it as a supplement to his newspaper. After months of negotiations (which included a bid from Nekrasov for *Sovremennik*) the novel found a home in *Russkii vestnik* and was published there in installments from March to August 1863.

Because of the novel's serialization, the second half was still a work-in-progress by the time the first had been sent to press. This fact explains the sharp change of tone from the first to the second part of the novel, where the descriptive realism of the story following the life of the young gentleman Baklanov was suddenly infused with the publicistic fervour of *oblichitel'naia literatura*. Thus, practical considerations informed not only the discussions of the novel that Pisemskii had with his colleagues, but also its composition and the development of the plot.

'Роман этот есть дело всей моей жизни: худ-ли, хорош-ли он выйдет, но мне уж лучше и сильнее не написать',[40] Pisemskii wrote to B.N. Almazov. Indeed, as Pisemskii predicted, *Vzbalamuchennoe more* became his magnum opus. Its devastating effect on his literary career overshadowed his following six novels. Furthermore, unlike the artistically more polished *Tysiacha Dush*, *Vzbalamuchennoe more* was most representative of Pisemskii's original style. The novel showcased Pisemskii's artistic strengths, such as shrewd (if cynical) characterization, sarcastic humour and naturalistic honesty, but also exposed his particular weaknesses: a lack of continuity in style, improbable twists, weak plotting, and sudden switches into moralizing.

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[39] 'Отдаю его в "Русский вестник", так как по духу подходит оному; […] прочесть бы и посоветоваться насчет романа – штуку решительную написал…'. Pisemskii, 'Letter of 19 February/3 1863 March to I. S. Turgenev', *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 73 (1964), 177.

[40] Pisemkii, 'Letter of 15 November 1862 to B. N. Almazov', in *Pis'ma*, p. 153.

As well as coming out in monthly instalments in *Russkii vestnik*, *Vzbalamuchennoe more* was simultaneously published as a separate edition, and then reissued twice in 1868 and 1884–5 with minor changes.[41] The critics reacted with a plethora of reviews, some of which were genuine discussions of the novel's literary qualities. Most, however, chose the publication of the novel as an opportunity for a public debate with a popular author, sometimes slipping into an outright condemnation of his character and writings.[42]

But even though the novel was pilloried the critics, it was widely read: as A. P. Miliukov noted in his memoires, 'the novel was, without a doubt, read by all our reading public'.[43] It must have attracted the readers with its masterful, if biased, representation of contemporary reality and a lively, titillating plot. As another critic predicted disparagingly, 'dirty descriptions of scandals will make this novel very popular among old men and old maids'.[44]

Vzbalamuchennoe more was firmly situated in the context of contemporary political and aesthetic debates. Pisemskii's quest to expose the 'vilest and worst' aspects of nihilism in contemporary society was not a one man crusade. Prior to the publication of Pisemskii's novel, Mikhail Katkov published a number of articles exposing what he saw as the evil of Russian nihilism. By joining *Russkii vestnik* as a

[41] Zubkov traces these changes in K. Iu. Zubkov, 'Roman A. F. Pisemskogo "Vzbalamuchennoe more": vospriiatie sovremennikov i istoriia teksta', in *Ozernaia tekstologiia: trudy IV letnei shkoly na karel''skom peresheike po tekstologii i istochnikovedeniiu russkoi literatury* (Poselok Poliany (Uusikirko) Leningradskoi oblasti: St. Petersburgskii institut iudaiki, 2007), pp. 97-109.

[42] For a full bibliography of reviews, see *Pis'ma*, pp. 653-54.

[43] '…его ["Взбаламученное море"], без сомнения, прочла уже вся наша читающая публика.' A. P. Miliukov, 'Mertvoe i vzbalamachennoe more', in *Otgoloski na literaturnye i obshhestvennye iavleniia* (St. Petersburg: Tipografia F. S. Sushchinskago, 1875), pp. 188-203 (p. 195).

[44] 'Грязное описание скандалов, которое сделает роман вероятно весьма популярным между старичками и старыми девами…'. V. A. Zaitsev, 'Vzbalamuchennyi romanist', *Russkoe slovo*, 10 (1863), pp. 23-44 (p. 30).

literary editor, Pisemskii effectively pledged allegiance to Katkov's political agenda. Most revealingly, one of Katkov's 1862 articles catalogued different types of nihilists, all of which were faithfully represented in Pisemskii's novel.[45]

This connection was noticed by contemporaries, who joked about the 'troubled way of thinking' [взбаламученный образ мыслей] that had taken hold of Pisemskii ever since he joined *Russkii vestnik*, with its propensity to 'hate and revile anything that is fresh, young and is starting a journey on the road of life'.[46] Pisemskii, on the contrary, felt at the time that Katkov was 'a hero […] inspiring the country in these difficult times. In this case, we all want to help him in his sacred endeavors'.[47] This alliance did not last – most likely not for any ideological reasons but because of professional disagreements.[48]

Vzbalamuchennoe more was initially conceived as the coming-of-age story of a typical young man.[49] Almost exactly as planned, the novel ended up spanning

[45] Katkov published no fewer than six articles on nihilism in *Russkii vestnik* throughout 1862 and 1863. See M. N. Katkov, 'K kakoi my prinadlezhim partii' (*Russkii vestnik*, 37 (1862), 832-44), 'Neskol'ko slov po povodu odnogo ironicheskogo slova' (*Russkii vestnik*, 38 (1862), 463-81), 'Roman Turgeneva i ego kritiki' (*Russkii vestnik*, 39 (1862), 393-424), 'Zametka dlia izdatelia Kolokola' (*Russkii vestnik*, 39 (1862), 834-52), 'O nashem nigilizme (po povodu romana Turgeneva)' (*Russkii vestnik*, 40 (1862), 402-26), 'Po povodu stat'i "Rokovoi vopros"' (*Russkii vestnik*, 45 (1862), 398-418).

[46] 'С тех пор, как он переселился в "Русский вестник", взбаламученный образ мыслей обязывает его ненавидеть и чернить все свежее, молодое и выступающее на дорогу жизни и деятельности.' V. A. Zaitsev, 'Vzbalamuchennyi romanist', p. 34.

[47] Pisemskii, 'Letter of 4/15 June 1863 to I. S. Turgenev', *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 73 (1964), 177.

[48] Pisemskii felt that Katkov did not treat him fairly as an editor: '… с первых же дней у нас пошло как-то неладно: видимо было, что [им] они привыкли к какому-то холопскому и подобострастному отношению своих сотрудников и что им более нужен корректор, чем соредактор – чем дальше шло, тем натянутее и несноснее становились наши отношения, так что мы почти одновременно и к обоюдному удовольствию решились прервать их…'. Pisemskii, 'Letter of 8 May 1866 to I. S. Turgenev', in *Pis'ma*, p. 203.

[49] '…сюжетом думаю выбрать авто-биографию обыкновенного человека'. Pisemskii, 'Letter of 17 August 1851 to A. A. Kraevskii', in ibid., p. 42.

nineteen years in the life of the main character, the 'regular' young gentleman Alexandr Baklanov. Stretching roughly from 1843 to 1862, the novel ended in the immediate present of the author and the readers, offering Pisemskii's views on the reasons for the contemporary crisis in a society overrun by young 'empty-heads' [свищи] with unsustainable political ideas.

The novel stood out among other contemporary texts because it offered an unusually critical description of the young nihilists. Previous popular fictional representations, such as Turgenev's *Ottsy i deti* (1862) treated the issue gingerly but compassionately. Of course, none of the vitriol that Pisemskii espoused in *Vzbalamuchennoe more* came even close to the chilling portraits of devious youths that found their way onto the pages of Dostoevskii's *Besy* a few years later. However, this was the first time that a writer as prominent as Pisemskii had viciously attacked the young radicals that were gaining more and more prominence in society.

This charge has earned *Vzbalamuchennoe more* the title of the first 'antinihilist novel' in the history of Russian literature, but recently this dated definition became an object of an academic debate on account of its politicised nature.[50] Whether

[50] In 1969 P. G. Pustovoit noted that since the novel was chronologically the first to pursue this topic, it did not yet have the 'chrystallised plot scheme' [не выкристаллизовалась отчетливо […] сюжетная схема] typical of the later examples of the genre. (Pustovoit, *A. F. Pisemskii v istorii russkogo romana,* pp. 169, 72). L. M. Lotman also believed that Pisemskii was 'searching for the form of the pamphlet-novel', and therefore could not yet make use of the rigid plot and stereotypical motives that this type of novels would rely on in the future. (L. M. Lotman, 'A.F. Pisemskii', p. 229). Contemporary scholarship is wary of this approach: for example, Siniakova argues that the 'antinihilist pathos' of the novel is simply a consequence of Pisemskii's polemic style, whereas Zubkov questions the entire idea of the validity of the definition of the 'antihilist novel' as introduced by A. G. Tsetlin in 1929 (A. G. Tseitlin, 'Siuzhetika antinigilisticheskogo romana', in *Literatura i marksizm,* 2 (1929), 33-74). Zubkov argues that Tseitlin's theory was partly constructed as an attempt to describe the structure of Pisemskii's novel. In addition, Tseitlin believed that *Ottsy i deti* was in fact the first antinihilist novel. However, the scholar notes that Tseitlin grouped such an array of later texts under this definition that the label became more ideological than literary and did not really tell us

Vzbalamuchennoe more was the original antinihilist novel or not, the nature of its polemical thrust was certainly anti-radical. To build a comprehensive counter-argument, Pisemskii aimed to analyse the social processes that produced such characters as Turgenev's Bazarov. In this new reality, where radical nihilists came to occupy positions of power, 'regular men' like Pisemskii's hero Baklanov found it difficult to fit in. For Pisemskii, this was a conflict of worldviews rather than of generations. In his novel, the old bureaucrats and moneylenders are in league with the young 'empty heads' [свищи]. It is not certain whom Pisemskii hated more: the familiar old villains who wanted money and power, or the 'goalless' and rudderless youths.

The radical critics did not take kindly to such denunciations. 'Статей пропасть и все разумеется в ругательном тоне',[51] Pisemskii wrote to his friend Boris Almazov, trying to persuade him to publish a favourable review. In fact, not all the reviews were negative: E. N. Edel'son's article in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* was encouraging, if not laudatory, but the majority of the critics indeed had nothing good to say about Pisemskii's work. This was partly a result of Pisemskii's already tarnished reputation: little things that would have been overlooked before were now pounced on and dissected. To make things worse, the most scathing reviews were published by such influential figures as Gertsen or in such influential journals as *Sovremennik*.

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much about Pisemskii's text per se. For more on this controversy see K. Iu. Zubkov, 'K voprosu o zhanrovoi spetsifike romana A. F. Pisemskogo "Vzbalamuchennoe more": Pisemski i Gogol'', in *Rossica Petropolitana Juniora* <http://mir.spbu.ru/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=768:rpj-04> [accessed 13 August 2016]; L. N. Siniakova, *Kontseptsiia cheloveka v romanakh A. F. Pisemskogo 1860-1870-kh gg.*, pp. 5, 6, 55.

[51] Pisemskii, 'Letter of 29 January 1864 to B. N. Almazov', in *Pis'ma*, p. 166.

Hatred for *Vzbalamuchennoe more* united representatives of opposing literary camps and proponents of different political and aesthetic doctrines. Zubkov identified a positive review in *Kievskii telegraf*, but even that review used the novel to prove its point about the positive effect of corporal punishment.[52] The other two laudatory references can be found in Turgenev's letter to N. V. Sherban' (he called the novel a 'great thing' [отличная вещь] that he 'really liked'),[53] and in N. Schcherbina's unpublished letter to Katkov.[54] In comparison, the range of negative, even scornful, reviews was impressive. The criticism did not abate with the passage of time: Pisarev referred to the numerous weaknesses of Pisemskii's style in 1864 and 1866, as did Miliukov in 1875, as well as Shelgunov in 1895.

Pisemskii's contemporary Nikolai Shelgunov believed that the main problem with *Vzbalamuchennoe more* was that it ended up being too epic for Pisemskii, a writer whose talent shone most in naturalist observations and folk-type anecdotes turned into short prose pieces. Essentially, Shelgunov's claim was that Pisemskii was not talented enough to create a sweeping panorama of Russian life.[55] Pisemskii indeed aimed for an all-encompassing view of contemporary society, as is evidenced by his correspondence at the time. Even if critics thought that his attempt had failed,

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[52] I. K. 'Mysli o "Vzbalamuchennom more"', *Kievskii telegraf*, 3 July1864, p. 379; *Kievskii telegraf*, 5 July 1864, p.383, as cit. in Zubkov, 'Roman A. F. Pisemskogo "Vzbalamuchennoe more"', p. 97.

[53] Pisemskii, 'Letter of 4/15 June 1863 to I. S. Turgenev', *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 73 (1964), 178.

[54] Identified by A. V. Listratova in 1967. See A. V. Listratova, 'O literaturno-obschestvennoi positsii A. F. Pisemskogo 60-kh godov', *Uchenye zapiski Ivanovskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo instituta,* 38 (1967), 48-49. Cit. in Jenkins, *A Study of A. F. Pisemsky…*, p. 187.

[55] 'Г-н Писемский при всех своих способностях далеко не мыслитель, и претензия его рисовать широкие, всероссийские картины вовсе не соответствует его силе анализа и способности понимать верно исторический смысл явлений. Задавшись обольстительною мыслью нарисовать что-нибудь грандиозное и чувствуя в своей памяти богатый запас материалов, г. Писемский ограничивается лишь широковещательным заглавием, изобличающим его смелый замысел и в то же время бессилие перед задачей.' N. V. Shelgunov, *Literaturnaia kritika* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1974), p. 49.

he did not abandon this ambition. In a later novel, *Lyudi sorokovykh godov* (1869), he would once again try to depict the life of a character who was a typical representative of his class, if not of his generation. Generally, critics agreed with Shelgunov that Pisemskii had bitten off more than he could chew: the epic sweep of a panoramic novel was too much for his talent. In a struggle to use his widely acknowledged gift for naturalist descriptions to convey an overtly polemic message, Pisemskii compromised the stylistic homogeneity of his text by introducing, among other things, overtly metafictional elements.

For the duration of the six chapters in Part Five, the previously omniscient narrator of the novel turnes into a character called Pisemskii, who closely resembles the actual writer. This character assumes the duties of the first-person narrator, but also engaged with the other characters of the novel despite having claimed elsewhere that they were 'completely fictional figures'.[56] This created an ontologically confusing web of metafictional relations, not unlike those in typical twentieth-century metafictional texts such as John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), a textbook example of the same device in a twentieth-century metafictional novel.[57]

Among Pisemskii's contemporaries, only a few noticed the irregular appearance of the author as a character in the fictional narrative. Nikolai Shelgunov noted in his article on *Vzbalamuchennoe more*: 'Baklanov invited Mr. Pisemskii to his house. "What do you mean, Mr. Pisemskii?" asks the reader. Indeed, Mr. Pisemskii; the author was personally acquainted not only with Baklanov, but also with Sofi, and had even read his texts at her literary evenings. It was with Mr.

[56] A. F. Pisemskii, *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, p. 304.

[57] Waugh cites Fowles's novel as a typical example of metafiction throughout her theoretical study. See Waugh, *Metafiction*, pp. 4, 13, 22, 32-34, and futher.

Pisemskii that Baklanov had shared his unhappiness about the emancipation of serfs'.[58] Another reviewer remarked that the appearance of the author himself was most likely 'a simple oversight that would be crossed out by the author in the second edition'.[59]

Despite the critics' comments on their unorthodox nature, Pisemskii did not eliminate these metafictional elements. Far from crossing out the offending passages, in future revisions Pisemskii emphasised exactly this narrative trick. Instead of the off-hand introduction of the narrator-character in the 1863 edition of the novel ('Собственно говоря, Бакланов был старый мой знакомый'), the 1867 text offered an explanation of his sudden appearance: 'Извиняюсь перед читателем, что для лучшего разъяснения смысла событий я по необходимости должен ввести самого себя в мой роман; дело в том, что Бакланов был старый мой знакомый'.[60]

Pisemskii had never introduced himself as a character in his fiction or drama before, and has not left any overt clues as to why he would turn to this technique in his second novel. However, his attempt to merge real and fictional worlds in *Vzbalamuchennoe more* by means of introducing himself as a character was not arbitrary. An examination of Pisemskii's views on the nature of literary realism reveals aesthetic reasons behind this particular narrative strategy. Pisemskii's interpretation of Belinskii's aesthetic legacy, his understanding of Gogol''s style and his fixation on the notions of 'true' and 'false' in realist fiction, explored below, all shed light onto his seemingly bizarre use of metafictional narrative in his novel.

[58] N. V. Shelgunov, *Literaturnaia kritika*, p. 167.

[59] N. B., 'Tekuchaia belletristika', *Den'*, 32 (1864), p. 18. Cited in Zubkov, 'Roman A. F. Pisemskogo "Vzbalamuchennoe more"', p. 103.

[60] Ibid.

Considering the generally erratic nature of Pisemskii's opinions,[61] we have only a few texts from which to deduce his aesthetic position: his letters to Maikov, Turgenev and F. I. Buslaev, and his 1855 review of the second part of *Mertvye dushi*. In these texts Pisemskii addressed an aesthetic issue that was most important for his own work: the conflict between realist representation and didactic impulse in fiction.

Pisemskii referred to his letter to Buslaev as 'a confession of my thoughts and aesthetic views'[62] and it is the most comprehensive account of the writer's aesthetic views that we have. Buslaev sent Pisemskii his 'leaflet' [брошюрка], *O znachenii sovremennogo romana i ego zadachakh* (1877), and in his reply Pisemskii shared his opinion of the article and his own views on the novel. The letter addressed the problem of didacticism in the novel:

> Вы от романа совершенно справедливо считаемого Вами за самого распространенного и прочного представителя современной художественной литературы, требуете дидактики, поучения, так как он может популяризовать всю необъятную массу сведений и многовековых опытов. Действительно, не связанный ни трудною формою чисто лирических произведений, ни строгою верностью событиям исторических повествований, ни тесными рамками драмы, роман свободней на ходу своем и может многое захватить и многое раскрыть. Но достигает ли он этого на практике, как только автор задал себе подобную задачу?[63]

[61] Pustovoit, *A. F. Pisemskii v istorii russkogo romana*, pp. 37, 50; L.N. Siniakova, 'Esteticheskii manifest A. F. Pisemskogo: stat'ia o vtorom tome "Mertvykh dush" N. V. Gogolia', *Vestnik Novosibirskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta,* 5 (2006), pp. 34-42 (p. 34).

[62] 'Исповедь своих мыслей и эстетических воззрений'. Pisemskii, 'Letter of 4 November 1877 to F.I. Buslaev', in *Pis'ma*, pp. 364-7 (p. 367).

[63] Ibid., p. 364.

In Pisemskii's opinion, didacticism in a novel was a great idea that was usually poorly realised. Contemporary novels (including Chernyshevskii's Chto delat'?) that shared such ambitions were doomed to 'swift and eternal oblivion' [скорое и вечное забвение]. In contrast, 'the old big novelists' [большие старые романисты] such as Cervantes, Smollett, Walter Scott and George Sand, as well as Pushkin and Lermontov, were 'poetic' [поэтические] and managed to influence their readers without even trying. Gogol', on the other hand, compromised himself by resorting to open lecturing in the form of lyrical digressions, because he was 'confused by the advice of his friends, who had no idea about aesthetics and no understanding of the character or limitations of this great writer's gift'.[64]

Pisemskii understood the novel differently:

> …[роман] как всякое художественное произведение, должен быть рожден, а не придуман; что, бывши плодом материального и духовного организма автора, в то же время он должен представлять концентрированную действительность: будь то внешняя, открытая действительность, или потаенная, психическая. Лично меня все считают реалистом-писателем и я именно таков, хотя в то же самое время с самых ранних лет искренно и глубоко сочувствовал писателям и другого пошиба, только желал бы одного, чтобы это дело было в умелых руках.[65]

As these remarks show, Pisemskii was not against *romans à thèse* as such, but approached such texts according to primarily aesthetic criteria and had no sympathy for those in which 'there was no art, no artists, just rhetorical cries' [нет ни

[64] 'Сбитый с толку разными своими советчиками, лишенными эстетического разума и решительно не понимавших ни характера, ни пределов дарования великого писателя'. Ibid., p. 365.

[65] Ibid., p. 366.

художества, ни художников, а есть только риторические крики].[66] Earlier, in a letter to A.N. Maikov the writer complained about critics who are so preoccupied with their search for social messages in novels that they tended to overlook the aesthetic qualities of literary texts:

> Когда придут эти блаженные времена, когда критика в искусстве будет видеть искусство, имеющее в себе самом цель, когда она, разбирая 'Обыкновенную историю' Гончарова, забудет и думать о направлении, в которым он написан, а будет говорить, что этот роман прекрасен и художественен, что 'Ревизор' вовсе не донос на взяточников-чиновников, а комедия, над которой во все грядущие времена станут смеяться народы…[67]

Pisemskii felt, perhaps, that at this point he was one of the few people who gave preference to aesthetics over rhetoric. Contemporary accounts show that Pisemskii held similar views throughout his career. The writer Petr Boborykin, who took over *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* after Pisemskii left, remembered that his predecessor preferred to avoid 'sharp tendentiousness in fiction, saturated with famous, albeit fashionable topics' and believed it to be detrimental to 'literary ideals'.[68] For Pisemskii, as he explained in a letter to Turgenev in 1855, the realist representation of 'truth' [правда] ultimately constituted art itself:

> Я теперь желал бы посоветовать всем молодым начинающим писателям, писать только то, что они сами прожили, если бы даже это

[66] Ibid.

[67] Pisemskii, 'Letter of 12 March 1854 to A.N. Maikov', in *Pis'ma*, pp. 63-64.

[68] 'Он не любил резкой тенденциозности в беллетристике, пропитанной известными, хотя бы и очень модными, темами, и боялся, что "свистопляска" в "Современнике" и "Искре" понизит уровень литературных идеалов.' P. D. Boborykin, *Za polveka: vospominaniia* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2003), p. 172.

вышло несколько бестактно, но оно непременно будет искренно и правда. Тогда как сразу вставать в позу наблюдателя и еще наблюдателя юмориста, для этого надобно долго и поглубже выкупаться в житейском омуте и иметь несомненные силы таланта, а то вместо ударов действительности будет колотить по каким-то фантомам собственного воображения и, как Дон-Кихот, сражаться с мельницами.[69]

The concepts of the 'truth' [правда] and the 'lie' [ложь] formed the axis of Pisemskii's views on literature and art in general. 'Lie' is a recurrent motive in Pisemskii's correspondence in the 1860s, and in *Vzbalamuchennoe more*. The novel's final line described the text as 'a truthful, if not all-encompassing, picture of contemporary morals; and if it did not manage to represent all of Russia, it had at least carefully brought together all of its lies'.[70] Immediately after *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, Pisemskii started working on a cycle of stories entitled *Russian Liars*, in which he aimed to 'present Russian life through a typology of liars'.[71] The cycle was never completed, but Pisemskii's preoccupation with the 'lies' and 'truths' of contemporary life was clear. 'Lie' for Pisemskii came to mean both the falsehood of society's fads and an aesthetic failure, an inability to represent reality in its fullness.[72]

In Pisemskii's 1855 review of the second half of *Mertvye dushi* 'truth' and 'lies' become the most important criteria by which a literary work is judged. The article 'Sochineniia N. V. Gogolia, naidennye posle ego smerti. Pokhozhdeniia

[69] Pisemskii, 'Letter of 30 May/11 June 1855 to I. S. Turgenev', *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, 73 (1964), 140.

[70] '…представляем ему верную, хотя и не полную картину нравов нашего времени, и если в ней не отразилась вся Россия, то зато тщательно собрана вся ее ложь". Pisemskii, *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, p. 549.

[71] L. M. Lotman, 'A. F. Pisemskii', p. 229.

[72] For more on this dichotomy see Pavlova, *Belletristika A. F. Pisemskogo 1840-1850-kh gg. i problema khudozhestvennogo metoda,* pp. 9-10, 15.

Chichikova, ili mertvye dushi. Chast' vtoraia' came out in *Otechestvennye zapiski* in October. Pisemskii was determined to 'tell the truth' about Gogol', even if other critics would not agree with his vision.[73] He characterised Gogol's style as 'true to reality' [верное действительности],[74] 'breathing with truthfulness' [истиной все это дышит],[75] and, in the same vein, referred to Gogol's mistakes as falsehoods, an inability to 'tell the truth' [говорить правду].[76]

This review revealed how closely Pisemskii's idea of realism was related to his understanding of Gogol''s style. Pisemskii made a direct allusion to Gogol''s masterpiece in the title of his 1858 novel *Tysiacha dush* and his contemporaries often referred to him as Gogol''s literary successor.[77]

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[73] 'Написал я статью о Гоголе.… Сказал, по крайнему своему убеждению, о нашем великом мастере правду; многие на меня, знаю, теперь восстанут, но верю в одно, что с течением времени правда останется за мной.' Pisemskii, 'Letter of 26 October 1855 to M. P. Pogodin', in *Pis'ma*, p. 98.

[74] A. F. Pisemskii, 'Sochineniia N.V. Gogolia, naidennye posle ego smerti. Pokhozhdeniia Chichikova, ili mertvye dushi. Chast' vtoraia', in *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Pravda, 1959), pp. 523-46 (p. 534).

[75] Ibid., p. 532.

[76] Ibid., p.546.

[77] Chernyshevskii, among others, designated Pisemskii a 'Gogolian writer' and approached him as such in his analysis of Pisemskii's peasant stories. (N. G. Chernyshevskii, 'Ocherki iz krest'ianskogo byta A. F. Pisemskogo', *PSS*, IV (1948), pp. 567-72). V. G. Avseenko's 1881 obituary noted that Pisemskii was closer to Gogol' than any other writer of the 1840s and called him 'an immediate heir to Gogol'' (V. G. Avseenko, 'Pamiati A. F. Pisemskogo', *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 26 (1881) (as cit. in Pustovoit, *A. F. Pisemskii v istorii russkogo romana*, p.73), and Skabichevskii counted Pisemskii among the writers of the 1850s whose genealogy went back to Gogol' (Skabichevskii, 'A. F. Pisemskii, ego zhizn' i literaturnaia deiatel'nost', p. 1). Soviet scholars followed suit: M. P. Eremin called Pisemskii 'an artist of Gogol''s school' (M. P. Eremin, *A. F. Pisemskii* (Moscow: Znanie, 1956), p. 7) and Pustovoit referred to the writer's attempts at 'Gogol''s realist method' (Pustovoit, *A. F. Pisemskii v istorii russkogo romana*, p. 79). Lotman discussed Belinskii's influence on Pisemskii's ideas about Gogol', as well as his view of Gogol' chiefly as a satirist (L. M. Lotman, 'A. F. Pisemskii', p. 204).

We should note, though, that literary criticism of the 1860s used this label widely, and often indiscriminately. The phrase 'Gogolian trend'[78] [гоголевское направление] was adopted to replace 'natural'naia shkola', a term that had effectively been banned by the censors after Belinskii's death. The resulting hybrid, 'gogolevskaia shkola', conflated the actual traits of Gogol''s poetics with Belinskii's understanding of the goals of contemporary literature as formulated in his articles on Gogol. Thus, when Pisemskii's contemporaries called him 'a writer in the Gogolian tradition', they generally implied that his style was similar to the other writers of the 'gogolevskoe napravlenie', i.e. that he was at the forefront of progressive literary development. Such writers had to conform to a set of rules: to set their story in contemporary Russia, preferably in the provinces, and to represent reality faithfully but at the same time critically, through the prism of social satire.

When *Vzbalamuchennoe more* came out in 1863, Pisemskii enjoyed the reputation of precisely this type of writer. In a way, the novel seemed to be a stylistic setback: critics were most surprised by Pisemskii's reversion to the naturalist style of the 1840s and, more disturbingly, by an at times almost complete subjugation of the realist narrative to polemical outbursts. Considering Pisemskii's declared contempt for tendentiousness, his direct appeals to the reader in *Vzbalamuchennoe more* might seem out of character. However, in Pisemskii's opinion, he merely tried to present the facts in a way that would prove his overall argument. Unlike *Chto delat'?* (a novel destined for oblivion, in Pisemskii's opinion), his novel was not propelled by a utopian impulse. Neither did he aim for overt didacticism, as this would compromise his realist credentials, on which he kept insisting. It seems that the Bezrylov feuilleton affair had compromised Pisemskii's public persona to such an extent that

[78] This translation of the term is offered by Victor Terras in Victor Terras, *Handbook of Russian Literature*, p. 366.

he had to resort to a literary statement instead of an article or an open debate. As Maya Jenkins suggests, 'realising the futility of combatting radical ideas by upholding the principle of "art for art's sake", Pisemskii decided to face the radicals in a more militant fashion'.[79]

On the one hand, Pisemskii sympathised with the proponents of 'pure art'; on the other, he shared Belinskii's idea that 'that literature should not shun reality, no matter how ungainly this reality might appear'.[80] It is this intermediary aesthetic position between Belinskii and Druzhinin that made Pisemskii's struggle to find a balance (in theory and in practice) between realism and didacticism even more apparent.

Despite the lack of philosophical expertise on Pisemskii's side, the problem that he addressed was not trivial. The integration of didacticism and realist narration remains a recurrent issue in the theory of mimesis. According to Wellek, this is precisely the main contradiction of the theory of realism:

> in [the] original definition, 'the objective representation of contemporary social reality', didacticism is implied or concealed. In theory, completely truthful representation of reality would exclude any social purpose or propaganda. Obviously, the theoretical difficulty of realism, its contradictoriness lies in its very point. […] there is a tension between description and prescription, truth and instruction, which cannot be resolved logically.[81]

[79] Jenkins, *A Study of A. F. Pisemsky*, p. 186.

[80] Ibid., p. 93.

[81] Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism*, p. 242.

Erich Auerbach's insistence that 'real realism […] must not be comic, that it must not be didactic or ethical or rhetorical or idyllic'[82] led him to exclude Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (and by extension, George Eliot or Leo Tolstoi) from the ranks of realist writers.[83]

In the nineteenth century, this 'tension between description and prescription' was at the centre of the literary polemics of the 1860s. The 'intersection of two aesthetic imperatives, that of imitation and that of visionary didacticism'[84] reached its height in the philosophy of the Russian utilitarian critics, such as Dobroliubov and in literary texts of the period. It is precisely the examination of 'the conflicting underlying aesthetic imperatives of the texts [that] helps make sense of their volatility, instability and radicalism'.[85]

The transgression of the ontological levels of narrative in Pisemskii's text was a consequence of the specific literary climate of the 1860s, when, for a brief period, metafictional narratives became almost de rigueur. It seems that in the 1860s, addressing an ideological matter in a literary text also called for an explicit examination of the aesthetic assumptions behind the narrative process. The theory of realism that was outlined in Belinskii's articles two decades earlier was re-examined not just by critics, but also by the writers of the 1860s, who were struggling to adapt the narrative legacy of the natural school to the demands of the contemporary literary fashion for utilitarianism and radical aesthetics. One manifestation of Pisemskii's attempt to reconcile the two was the introduction of a self-conscious narrator who entered his own story.

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[82] René Wellek, 'Auerbach's Special Realism', *The Kenyon Review*, 16 (1954), 303.

[83] Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism*, p. 242.

[84] Sarah Ruth Lorenz, *Visionary Mimesis: Imitation and Transformation in the German Enlightenment and Russian Realism* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Berkley, 2012), p. 1.

[85] Ibid., p. 6.

3. *Vzbalamuchennoe more* as Metafiction

As evidenced by his correspondence, Pisemskii had a clear idea of the novel's structure and composition before he started writing. In a letter to A. A. Kraevskii of 17 August, 1851, he wrote:

> …сюжетом думаю выбрать авто-биографию обыкновенного человека: начну с рождения и буду следить за постепенным развитием человека. - Обстоятельствами жизни обставлю его самыми обыкновенными; препятствие со стороны цензуры вижу в одном только, что он должен еще в школе влюбиться, влюбиться невинно, наивно или даже глупо, прослежу потом все замашки юности, горькие уроки, постепенное охлаждение, в период которого он оглянулся на прошедшее и пишет записки.[86]

As planned, *Vzbalamuchennoe more* consisted of six parts, and followed the life of its main character, Aleksandr Baklanov. At the beginning of the novel, Baklanov is an impressionable and immature nineteen-year-old heir to a prosperous estate; in the concluding chapters, he is a disillusioned, bankrupt middle-aged man with few if any prospects in life. Each part describes a stage in Baklanov's life: from *barchuk* to student, to civil servant, and ultimately to misguided radical. The central love plot serves as a metaphor for Baklanov's wasted life: he falls in and out of love with his cousin Sofi, who keeps leaving him for more suitable and usually wealthier suitors. A series of subplots (Baklanov's love affairs and civil service court cases, Sofi's post-emancipation battle for her estate, the adventures of Sofi's maid Irodiada and her lover Mikhailo, etc.) maintain the lively pace of the novel and present a broad picture of the Russian society of the 1850s-60s.

[86] Pisemskii, 'Letter from 7 December 1851 to S. P. Shevyrev', in *Pis'ma*, p. 41-42 (p. 41).

Since Pisemskii chose to tell a story of an 'everyman', the first chapters of the novel introduced a typical landowner family, Baklanov's cousins the Basardins. A summary of the family history offered readers a snapshot of the immediate social environment in which Baklanov's life was to unfold. Pisemskii described the last twenty years in the life of Russian gentry, with their crumbling estates, boarding and military schools, petty scrambles for small governmental posts and the dependence of both masters and peasants on the effective management of the land. Here, Pisemskii's style was a curious mixture of Gogolian satire, Shchedrin's naturalism and Turgenev's lyricism, betraying his deep, if not uncritical, sympathy for the way of life he was depicting.

Aleksandr Baklanov, a 'young man wearing a student uniform'[87] first featured in the novel's fifth chapter aptly entitled 'Molodye otpryski'. Vain, weak and not particularly smart, he nonetheless won the reader's instant sympathy because of his sincere, and ardent efforts to succeed in life and love. Following the original outline, Baklanov's life-long infatuation with his cousin, Sofi Basardina, became a linchpin for the entire plot.

Part Two told the story of Baklanov's days at Moscow University, where 'his life moved forward in a brave and formidable fashion'.[88] After a brief sojourn on his country estate, Baklanov moved to St. Petersburg and tried to build a career. Pisemskii's considerable experience as a civil servant allowed him to draw an accurate picture of Baklanov's travails. Baklanov ends up with a post in the provinces, where he meets and marries a local beauty, Evpraksia, even though his heart belongs to his cousin Sofi.

[87] Pisemskii*, Vzbalamuchennoe more*, pp. 130-31.

[88] Ibid., p. 200.

Baklanov is portrayed as a well-rounded character, but Pisemskii's female characters usually have one dominating trait that defines their personality. This style of characterization is typical for writers who honed their style in shorter *ocherki*, like Saltykov-Shchedrin, Reshetnikov or Leskov. Sofi is a typical *femme fatale*, Baklanov's wife Evrpaksia a virtuous *materfamilias*, thre young nihilist Elena Bazelein, a satire on the new woman, etc. The events of their lives are governed by the whims of men: the third part of the novel ends with parallel scenes of Baklanov's triumphant wedding and Sofi's ultimate downfall in her final surrender to her devious moneylender lover.

The beginning of Part Four, published in June 1863, puzzled Pisemskii's contemporaries. Suddenly retreating from Baklanov's story, Pisemskii offered his readers musings on recent events in Russian history. If previous chapters were written in a style that was recognizably Pisemskii's own, Part Four was more polemical and openly didactic than any fiction he had ever published. This marked a departure within the novel from a mode of realist narration to a new, hybrid type of narrative that resulted from Pisemskii's struggle to unite a didactic message with realist poetics.

Chapter headings, previously playful and ironic ('Kapel'ka poezii i more prozy' (1:20); 'Znai nashikh!' (2:5); 'Dikii skif prosypaetsia v moem geroe' (3:10)), turned into the sharp and judgmental 'Prazdnye i porochnye mechtaniia' (4:4); 'Sobranie oblichitel'nykh svedenii' (4:11); 'Na iarogo satira nadet namordnik' (4:22)). This change of tone culminated in a chapter entitled 'Kto takoi sobstvenno geroi moi' (4:26), in which Baklanov's character was brutally dissected:

> … герой мой, во-первых не герой, а обыкновенный смертный из нашей так называемой образованной среды. Он праздно вырос, недурно

поучился, поступил по протекции на службу, благородно и лениво послужил, выгодно женился, совершенно не умел распоряжаться своими делами и больше мечтал, как бы пошалить, порезвиться и поприятней провести время. Он представитель того разряда людей, которые до 55 года замирали от восторга в итальянской опере и считали, что это высшая точка человеческого назначения на земле, а потом сейчас же стали, с увлечением и верою школьников, читать потихоньку 'Колокол'. Внутри, в душе у этих господ нет, я думаю, никакого самоделания, но зато натирается чем вам угодно снаружи – величайшая способность.[89]

It seemed as if the author had lost any sympathy for his hero. Indeed, Baklanov's life goes downhill in this part of the novel. Married and bored, he seduces the children's nanny and buys into a disastrous financial scheme with fake shares that leaves him almost bankrupt when it collapses. Fed up with family life, he gets back together with Sofi and leaves for St. Petersburg. The end of Part Four sees Pisemskii's hero fail at everything he previously cared for: career, family and fortune.

In Part Five, Baklanov and Sofi enjoy their glamorous life in the capital. The story catches up with recent times, and, to emphasise Baklanov's connection to immediate social reality, Pisemskii introduces himself as a character who befriends Baklanov and Sofi. He accompanies Baklanov to parties, flirts with Sofi at her soirées, discusses politics with Baklanov's friends and, finally, reads his own novella *Starcheskii grekh* [*An Old Man's Sin*] at one of Sofi's literary evenings. At the end of their stay, the Pisemskii-character sees Baklanov and Sofi off at the station. Thus, the story of their entire time in St. Petersburg is narrated from both objective and

[89] Ibid., p. 406.

subjective perspectives (Pisemskii-character merged with Pisemskii-narrator), allowing for many potential meta-observations.

The final part of the novel follows Baklanov's and Sofi's adventures in Europe and final return home. The story concludes with Baklanov and Evpraksia arriving in St. Petersburg in May when the city was in chaos because of the disastrous 1862 fires. The final passage, driving the author's point home, discusses the necessity of the truthful representation of all the lies and troubles of contemporary society.

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While preparing the novel for its second and third publication Pisemskii made a few changes. Most alterations were prompted by critics' concerns about the negative portrayal of peasants, as well the questionable character of some of Baklanov's remarks. The intrusion of the narrator as a character in his own story in chapter five remained unchanged, despite critics' comments on such a puzzling handling of the narrative.

There are several instances of metafictional narration in *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, demonstrating a series of minor and major ontological frame-breaks, or metalepses. Throughout the novel the narrator addresses the reader repeatedly and finally traverses the narrative levels altogether to join the cast of characters in Part Five. The external omniscient narrator turned into an internal one, ostensibly to 'better explain the meaning of events' [для лучшего разъяснения событий].[90]

On the one hand, Pisemskii-character never draws the reader's attention to the fact that he is not reporting actual events during those scenes in Part Five. On the other, earlier in the novel he explicitly states that Baklanov, Sofi and others were

[90] Ibid., p. 418.

'completely fictional figures'.[91] In Part Five, he continues to fulfill his function of a narrator as mediator between the readers and the story, but, entering the narrative, he gains control not only of how the story is told but also of how it unfolds.

Pisemskii thus managed to avoid the limitations of 'faux metafiction', in which, according to Patricia Waugh, 'the intrusive commentary of nineteenth-century metafiction […] functions mainly to aid the readerly concretization of the world of the book by forming a bridge between the historical and the fictional worlds. It suggests that the one is merely a continuation of the other, and it is thus not metafictional'.[92] The presence of the Pisemskii-character, introduced as 'a friend of Baklanov's', was meant to '*reinforce* the connection between the real and the fictional world',[93] but at the same time, the acknowledgement of the fictional premise of the narrative managed to '*expose* the ontological distinctness of the real and the fictional world, expose the literary conventions that disguise this distinctness'.[94]

I offer a close reading of the explicitly metafictional scenes in Part Five of the novel in order to investigate how Pisemskii's ideas on ideology and aesthetics were manifested on the level of the narrative. However, aside from the five chapters in which the narrator features as a character, there are also nine other minor metalepses in the text, and I would like to examine them one by one. As isolated occurrences, they strike neither the lay reader nor the literary critic as something out of the ordinary, but when viewed together, these narrative transgressions offer an insight into the literary realisation of Pisemskii's polemic argument. Moreover, this analysis

[91] Ibid., p. 304.

[92] Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 32.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid.

exposes Pisemskii's practical understanding of the ontology of fiction, emerging in an attempt to produce a politically astute and at the same time aesthetically pleasing realist narrative.

Following nineteenth-century novel-writing conventions, Pisemskii maintains a dialogue with a 'reader' [читатель] throughout the novel. In this dialogue, a distinct portrait of the reader emerges, allowing us to reconstruct Pisemskii's idea of his implied and ideal readers. The appeals to the implied reader feature in various parts of the novel, continuing past the stylistic break in Part Four. Generally, the narrator addresses the implied reader for two reasons: to elicit sympathy for Baklanov, or to direct the reader's attention to a particularly important political statement.

The first appeal to the implied reader is found in Part One, chapter 8. Here, the narrator describes young Baklanov's circumstances at his parents' house:

> Припомните, читатель, ваше юношество, первое, раннее юношество! Вы живете с родителями. Вам все как-то неловко курить трубку или папироску в присутствии вашего отца. […] То же, или почти то же самое, чувствовал и мой девятнадцатилетний герой.[95]

In order to win the reader's sympathy, Pisemskii is deftly using a device that would later become Tolstoi's trademark: attributing a universal emotion to particular character. The reader cannot help but sympathise with the young Baklanov, emerging from under his parents' wing. Since the novel opens with a brief history of the Basardins, Baklanov is first introduced to the reader as their guest; straightway, the main character is represented as a member of a larger community of landed gentry. The reader is, therefore, invited to relate not only to Baklanov's forays into adult life,

[95] Pisemskii, *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, p. 147.

but also to his attempts to find a place for himself in the world of his ancestors. His quest for a suitable role in a rapidly changing world is the essence of the novel's plot. Thus, the scene becomes significant as an act of foreshadowing of both the plot and the reader's role in interpreting the rest of the novel.

The reader is next summoned when young Baklanov claims to have seduced Sofi. He boasts to his friend Veniavin that he has slept with her, but the reader is invited to questions such claims:

> Читатель очень хорошо видит, что молодой человек тут лгал безбожно, немилосердно! Но что делать? Это была не ложь, а скорее чересчур разыгравшаяся мечта![96]

'The reader' had indeed been offered a description of Baklanov's meeting with Sofi and know his account to be false. Curiously, 'the reader' here is invited to assume the position of the omniscient narrator: they share knowledge of what happened and both can see through Baklanov's bluff. Once again, the passage proves to be highly significant in the overall context of the novel, since one of its goals is to expose Baklanov as a fake. Thus, in the microcosm of this scene, the reader is invited to use her advanced knowledge to see through Baklanov's lies, but also to validate Baklanov's actions through acknowledging his experience as universal – a mental process that the reader is supposed to employ throughout the novel.

In the following instance in Part Three, the reader is invited to judge the authenticity of the plot development. Baklanov, incensed by the news of Sofi's alleged affair with the usurer Galkin, loses his temper in an argument with the local governor. As a result of such insubordination, his career in the civil service is

[96] Ibid., p. 149.

finished. This chapter presents details of this argument and its aftermath, and finishes on the narrator's note:

> На другой день Бакланов был отозван из комиссии к другим занятиям, более подходящим, как сказано в предписании, к его образованному уму. 'Что это?.. Не может быть!' – восклицает, вероятно, и по преимуществу великосветский читатель. Что делать!.. – смиренно отвечаю я: – очень уж зафантазировался, написал то, чего никогда не бывает, – извините.[97]

If previous references to 'the reader' in the text are conventional and do not break the narrative frame, this one introduces a notion of a fictional 'possible world', a discursive strategy typical of a metanarrative.[98] For a brief moment, Baklanov's story 'forks', allowing for an alternative course of events. Through asides such as this, Pisemskii makes sure his reader is aware that what is presented to him is fiction rather than studies from life. At the opening of chapter 11, after a description of the beginning of Baklanov's zealous service, the narrator explicitly states:

> Город, выбранный нами в настоящем случае, совершенно идеальный и несуществующий. Лица, в нем выведенные, тоже совершенно вымышленные, и мы только в них, по мере нашего понимания, старались выразить те явления, которые не совсем же неприсущи нашей жизни, а теперь, сообразно нашему плану, нам придется выдумать и целое уголовное дело […] Бунтовщиков предали

[97] Ibid., p. 317.

[98] For more on the semiotics of 'possible worlds' in metanarrative see Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, p. 217.

военно-судной комиссии. В комиссии этой предписали заседать и Бакланову.[99]

It is clear at this point that Baklanov is undeniably a fictional character. Not only is he investigating a fictional murder in a 'nonexistent' town, but the entire story of his investigation can have alternative outcomes.

The fictionality of the other characters is repeatedly emphasised:

> Если читатель даст себе труд пробежать в уме своем весь предыдущий рассказ мой, то он, несмотря на случайность выведенных мною лиц, […] проследить одну общую всем им черту: все они живут по какому-то, точно навсегда уже установившемуся для русского царства механизму.[100]

This note precedes one of the most tendentious passages in Pisemskii's novel: a summary of contemporary political developments that rapidly devolves into satire. The chapter starts with the author's musing on the recent events and ends with an update on Baklanov's life: disillusioned, Baklanov has resigned from the civil service and has dedicated himself to cultivating a moustache.

Another appeal to the reader draws attention to a particular character:

> Читатель, конечно, не узнал в этом человеке того самого Михайлу, который, в начале нашего романа, ехал молодым кучером с Надеждой Павловной.[101]

[99] Pisemskii, *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, p. 304-5.

[100] Ibid., p. 343-4.

[101] Ibid., p. 395.

This character has an intriguing meta-literary function. Mikhailo features in a mystery sub-plot that has self-consciously literary origins. The climax of this sub-plot occurs in Part Four, in a chapter called 'Stsena khot' by iz frantsuzskogo romana'. Mikhailo and his lover Irodiada, Sofi's maid, hire a boat to escape with Sofi's jewels, and then kill the boatman and flee. Just a few chapters later, Pisemskii-character accompanies Baklanov on his visit to Irodiada in prison. Pisemskii-character questions Irodiada and is present while she tells Baklanov the full story of her crimes. This becomes a point of convergence of two ontological levels within the fictional world of the novel. Irodiada is a fictional character, so much so that the sub-plot in which she features is stylistically different from the rest of the novel, and yet she meets the ostensibly 'real' Pisemskii-narrator. This establishes a confusing system of ontological levels, which might not have been intended by the author, but appears to be a result of his struggles with the unyielding realist discourse. The effect it creates is similar to any meta-narrative: unwittingly, it exposes the constructed nature of 'reality' as a concept.

The reader is constantly reminded that his mission is to follow Baklanov's spiritual and moral development:

> За все эти поступки, да, вероятно, и за предыдущие, читатель давно уже заклеймил моего героя именем пустого и дрянного человека![102]

Once again, the reader's point of view merges with that of the omniscient narrator. Indeed, these passages from *Vzbalamuchennoe more* testify that Pisemskii wanted this reader to become an active co-interpreter of the plot and the characters in the spirit of the eighteenth-century poetics of didacticism. The crucial description of

[102] Ibid., p. 407.

Baklanov as a character (quoted in full above) that is found in the novel follows a direct appeal to the reader:

> …что герой мой, во-первых не герой, а обыкновенный смертный из нашей так называемой образованной среды…[103]

Grammatically, this once again constructs a dialogue with an implied reader. Here, Pisemskii addresses the discrepancy between the reader's expectations and the way in which Baklanov's story unfolds. This rhetorical figure is used throughout the novel: Baklanov's failures are examined against the reader's supposed understanding of his character. This allows Pisemskii to emphasise the difference between Baklanov's self-image and how the other characters, the readers and the narrator perceive him. He is, after all, an 'average man', and the readers are repeatedly asked to sympathise with him. When Baklanov invests all his money into shares that prove to be worthless, the narrator inquires:

> А сами вы лучше, благоразумнее, накупили акций, признайтесь-ка?[104]

By the end of the novel Pisemskii fashions his readers into two groups, in much the same way as Chernyshevskii had in *Chto delat'?*. This categorization was, of course, typical for the public rhetoric of the period and not exclusive to these two texts; a similar division of readers into progressive and conservative categories will be discussed in the following chapter on Panaeva.[105] What is remarkable is that Pisemskii's demarcation of the two groups is carried out in the same rhetorical manner (through negation) and, most importantly, does not utilise the presumptions of gender that affect both Chernyshevskii and Panaeva. For Pisemskii, age, or

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid., p. 359.

[105] For more on the contemporary rhetorical constructs of the readers see fn. 202.

maturity, is more important as a factor. The final paragraph of *Vzbalamuchennoe more* contrasts 'sixteen-year-old female readers' and 'weak-headed youths' (naïve readers) to 'future historians', 'attentive' and 'trusting' (ideal readers):

> Труд наш мы предпринимали вовсе не для образования ума и сердца шестнадцатилетних читательниц и не для услады задорного самолюбия разных слабоголовых юношей: им лучше даже не читать нас; мы имели совершенно иную (чтобы не сказать: высшую) цель и желаем гораздо большего: пусть будущий историк со вниманием и доверием прочтет наше сказание: мы представляем ему верную, хотя и не полную картину нравов нашего времени, и если в ней не отразилась вся Россия, то зато тщательно собрана вся ее ложь.[106]

Despite the fact that Pisemskii never used the word 'nihilist' in his novel, his barbs against the young radical should be read in the context of Katkov's denunciatory publications in *Russkii vestnik*. Baklanov dismisses the young radicals as 'boys', a definition that is borrowed directly from Katkov's vocabulary, as well as 'empty-heads', 'seminarians-crammers' and 'chatterboxes'.[107] By denouncing the youngsters and the sentimental young ladies, he is reinforcing the bond with his ideal readers: future historians and a like-minded contemporaries.

Pisemskii's ideal reader is an inquisitive conservative; he is addressing those who already share his views. After the Bezrylov scandal Pisemskii distanced himself from the St. Petersburg literary establishment, and would not have expected to win

[106] Ibid., p. 549.

[107] '…мальчишки, с бессмысленными ребяческими стремлениями. Весь город обратился в мальчишек…'; 'в голове положительно ничего! пусто! свищ!', 'говоруны; точно мельницы, у которых нет нужных колес, а есть лишние: мелет, стучит, а ничего не вымалывает', 'семинаристы-дуботолки'. Ibid., p. 416-17.

over the radical readers with his expository tale.[108] The first few parts of the novel were neutral enough to make Nekrasov want to acquire it for *Sovremennik*. However, the scathing portrayal of young radicals and Chernyshevskii himself (unfavourably but recognizably portrayed as Baklanov's classmate Postskriptskii) as well the patronizing representation of peasants and sympathetic treatment of disowned landowners made it clear that Pisemskii did not intend to please the radical critics. Thus, Pisemskii's ideal reader does not like radicals but is curious about their social and historical origins.

These minor frame-breaks, analysed above, establish the image of Pisemskii's ideal reader and emphasise the fictionality of the narrated story. None of these appeals to the reader are out of the ordinary in a realist nineteenth-century novel, and similar instances of rhetorical dialogue with the reader can be found in a number of literary texts of the period both in Russian and European literatures. Not so in Part Five, where the most crucial metalepsis of the novel occurs. In this part of the novel, the omniscient narrator turns into a character, and loses his advanced knowledge. Grammatically, the third-person narration turns into a first-person one. Focalisation changes, as well: we no longer see the world through Baklanov's eyes; instead we are following Pisemskii-narrator in his St. Petersburg adventures.

For the sake of analysis, it would be useful to distinguish between several author-figures present in this part of the novel. First, there is the biographical author of the text, the actual historical figure Aleksei Pisemskii. Then, there is Pisemskii-character, a fictional figure closely resembling the implied author Aleksei Pisemskii. However, they are not identical. *Vzbalamuchennoe more* is not an autobiographical

[108] 'Штуку решительную написал… Вся петербургская литературная сволочь поднимется на меня". Pisemskii, 'Letter to I. S. Turgenev from 19 February/3 March 1863', *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 73 (1964), 177.

novel, and, aside from Pisemskii-character, all the other characters of the novel, as well as the events in which they take part, are fictional. Some of the events in the novel, like Baklanov's visit to London, are inspired by Pisemskii's actual travels, but the accounts of these events are not historically accurate. Finally, there is the metadiegetic narrator of *Vzbalamuchennoe more.* In the first four parts of the novel, he is practicing an 'objective method' of narration, then, in six chapters of Part Five, he switches to a 'subjective method' and merges with the figure of Pisemskii-character.

By that point, Baklanov has left his family, abandoned his career and moved to St. Petersburg with Sofi. Baklanov, as usual following the latest fashion, now wants to publish an 'aesthetic journal'. Pisemskii-character enters the narrative in chapter 3 of Part Five, as a guest at Baklanov's soirée in St. Petersburg:

> На этот вечер, вместе с прочими гостями, был приглашен и автор сего рассказа. Извиняюсь перед читателем, что для лучшего разъяснения смысла событий я, по необходимости, должен ввести самого себя в мой роман: дело в том, что Бакланов был мой старый знакомый.[109]

Echoing Pushkin's 'Онегин, добрый мой приятель…'[110] in his announcement of a friendship with Baklanov, the narrator here merges with the 'author of this story' and 'enters [his] own novel'. Two things stand out in this explanation. Firstly, the repeatedly stated fictionality of the narrated story and its characters is revoked. Someone who a few chapters before was an explicitly fictional character whose fate was subject to the narrator's whim, is now characterised as the

[109] Pisemskii*, Vzbalamuchennoe more*, p. 418. I have already quoted this passage to demonstrate differences between the novel's earlier (1863) and later (1867) versions. Analysed here in terms of the passage's metafictionality, it is reproduced again for ease of reference.

[110] A. S. Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin,* in *PSS,* V, p. 10.

author's old acquaintance. Secondly, the narrator believes that the introduction of himself as a character requires an apology. This is not the first time he apologises to the reader: the previous instances all concerned the perceived gap between the reader's expectations and the actual narrative. Thus, we can assume that the apology indicated that the author believes that this narrative turn is unexpected and immodest and therefore might not please the reader. However, in the previous instances, it was only the naïve reader whom the narrator was afraid of upsetting, whereas the ideal reader has been sharing the narrator's omniscience. In consequence, the narrator seems to imply that for the discerning reader this turn of events should not be such a surprise.

The figure of Pisemskii-character, who is acknowledged as the author of the unfolding narrative, is introduced to 'better explain the meaning of the events'; this is a very significant note. This is a major narrative frame-break: even though it might seem that the figure of Pisemskii-character is introduced to prove the authenticity of the related events (i.e. to prove that Baklanov is a real person, known to the author), the text explicitly states the reason for his appearance: it is necessary to help readers make sense of the events of the novel.

Throughout the chapters that feature Pisemskii-character, his longstanding connection to Baklanov is constantly emphasised: he is an 'old friend' [старый знакомый], who 'visits me often' [он довольно часто бывал у меня]. Moreover, Livanov, Baklanov's uncle, is also an old acquaintance ('Ливанов, вероятно, совершенно забыл, как мы с ним в сорок четвертом году обедали в одном доме…').[111] There is even a reference to the past outside of the chronology of the novel: one of the guests at the party is introduced to Pisemskii-character as 'the son

[111] Pisemskii*, Vzbalamuchennoe more*, p. 423.

of your former governor's wife'. The young man resembles a certain young boy, Kolia, the son of the governor's wife, introduced in chapter 19 of Part One, who was in love with an older girl, Sofi. We never find out if that is the same person: it could be the young man who is now pursuing Sofi in earnest, or it could equally be someone from the character's past, introduced to increase the number of ties connecting him to Baklanov's and Sofi's social circle.

After the narrator and author merge, it turns out that Pisemskii-character does not possess the advanced knowledge of the omniscient narrator. In fact, despite his promise to help 'explain the events', he seems to be at a disadvantage in relation to 'the reader'. When Sofi is introduced to Pisemskii the character as Baklanov's cousin, he suspects that this is not the entire truth ('Я сейчас же понял, что тут было что-то такое, да не то!').[112] 'The reader', on the other hand, knows perfectly well about the couple's affair. The character thus dissociates himself from the previously omniscient narrator, surrendering his advanced knowledge to the 'subjective method'. In order to emphasise the authenticity of his narrative, he surrenders an earlier claim that the characters with whom he associates, including Baklanov and Sofi, are entirely fictional. His role in this ontologically confusing situation, it seems, is now to steer the conversation to the topics that most expose Baklanov's pretense. For example, Pisemskii-character, a professional writer, criticises Baklanov's plan to start an aesthetic journal as an unoriginal and even foolish undertaking.

The discursive context of the first scenes in which Pisemskii-character appears betrays his functional role in the narrative. Baklanov treats him like a puppet, manually turning Pisemskii-character here and there to introduce him to new people:

[112] Ibid., p. 418.

Бакланов прежде всего представил меня Софи… […] Бакланов между тем повернул меня и познакомил с другим молодым человеком…. […] Бакланов затем обернул меня в третью сторону…[113]

Pisemskii-character is mesmerised by Sofi. Her fictional origins are completely forgotten: the author is infatuated with his own creation: ('Господи! - думал я: - родятся же на свете такие красавицы, от одного созерцания которых чувствуешь неописанный восторг').[114] Sofi is an admirer of Pisemskii's works, and she is introduced to him as 'почитательница ваших сочинений'. Intent on his expository mission, Pisemskii-character sees right through her: 'Но я видел очень хорошо, что ангел этот не читал ни строчки моих сочинений, да и вряд ли что-нибудь читал'.

The guest of honour at Baklanov's party is his uncle Livanov, who, Baklanov hopes, will fund his future journal. In order to convince his uncle that such a journal would be a necessary addition to the contemporary intellectual debate, Baklanov discusses contemporary aesthetics and the nature of literary realism. Baklanov is worried about the intrusive poetics of the naturalist school ('и всюду лезет грязь и сало этой реальной школы!') that he perceives to parade 'an excess of realism' ('я не хочу только этого крайнего развития реализма'). Irked by his uncle's insistence on the subversive nature of all contemporary art, Baklanov explains his view of realism in detail:

По-вашему, значит, – начал он: – надо признать в искусстве совершеннейший реализм; рисовать, например, позволяется только вид фабрик, машин, ну, и, пожалуй, портреты с некоторых житейских сцен, а

[113] Ibid., p. 418-19.

[114] Ibid.

в гражданском порядке, разумеется, социализм: на полумере зачем уж останавливаться![115]

The discussion comes to nothing as the party disbands. Intriguingly, the writer in the room does not say a word – he is too distracted by Sofi's presence to pay any attention to abstract discussions ('я дал себе слово сохранять молчание, и кроме того, нечего греха таить, больше всех их разговоров меня занимала Софи').[116] Pisemskii-character and Baklanov effectively change places: Baklanov discusses literature while Pisemskii is preoccupied with Sofi – the physical 'turning' of his guest back and forth that Baklanov was doing at the beginning of the chapter realises its metaphorical potential. Sofi's company almost robs Pisemskii-character of his function as witness: in her company, he keeps his eyes down so as not to be distracted from the sweet sound of her voice.

Chapter 4 is dedicated entirely to Baklanov and Pisemskii-character's visit to Irodiada in jail. As an internal focaliser, Pisemskii-character has two primary functions: he exposes the characters' pretenses and witnesses events firsthand. Here, he is acting as an eye-witness, since in the course of the scene both Baklanov and Irodiada mention that they want him to be present as such. This function is also actualised in the discourse of these scenes: Pisemskii-character exchanges knowing glances with Baklanov and questions the prisoner. He is essentially superfluous here, and retreats to the background almost as if becoming an external focaliser again. It is one of the rare occasions in the novel when the narrator's and Baklanov's views are the same (they both pity Irodiada, but are appalled by her crime), and in this scene their viewpoints almost merge into one.

[115] Ibid., p. 423.

[116] Ibid., p. 422.

Part Five contains two chapters that follow Baklanov's intellectual development. The first one, 'Baklanov-estetik', describes his plans to start an aesthetic journal. The opening statement of the second chapter of this kind, 'Baklanov-zhurnalist', brings together fiction and reality:

> Очень невдолге герой мой начал на моих глазах переделываться.[117]

On the one hand, this statement emphasises Baklanov's fictionality; on the other he is referred to as an actual person whose development the author is observing. In his analysis of Fowles's narrative technique, Frederick M. Holmes calls this device 'a paradox of omniscience': 'the narrator identifies himself as the author […] Consequently, he can periodically point out the artificial nature of his story without destroying it. Having momentarily dispelled the illusion that his characters have a reality apart from the book, he can continue to delineate the plot […]. The reader, therefore, soon forgets the narrators warning, once again becoming immersed in the verisimilitudinous account…'.[118]

Baklanov becomes more than a mere character: he turns into the embodiment of his times:

> Всем этим он становился мне бесконечно мил: какое общее я видел в нем явление всей этой шумящей около меня, как пущенная шутиха, жизни![119]

At this point, the ontological levels in *Vzbalamuchennoe more* converge into a complex and not an entirely coherent structure. As a result, the reader remains in a

[117] Pisemskii*, Vzbalamuchennoe more*, p. 428.

[118] Frederick M. Holmes, 'The Novel, Illusion, and Reality: The Paradox of Omniscience in the French Lieutenant's Woman', in *Metafiction*, ed. by Mark Currie, pp. 206-21 (p. 207).

[119] Pisemskii, *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, p. 428.

state of mild confusion as to what is real and what is fictional in the novel, but also about the stability of the border between the two worlds. This creates an ontological uncertainty, which is exacerbated by the author's constant references to the concepts of truth and lies. Since one of the topics of the novel is Baklanov's susceptibility to fashionable ideas, the reader's confusion becomes in itself an almost accidental additional tool of interpretation. Baklanov has trouble identifying authentic ideas, and the reader in turn is forced by the narrative structure of the text to contemplate notions of authenticity, truth and verisimilitude, echoing the character's (and possibly the author's) musings.

Baklanov does not trust Pisemskii-character. When his plans for the journal are met with the writer's disapproval, he rebukes him as 'a man from a different camp' [человек другого лагеря]. The point they most disagree on is sincerity:

> Искренности, искренности я больше желаю от вас, Бакланов! – сказал я ему однажды. – Я совершенно искренен, совершенно! - отвечал он мне. – Нет и нет! – кричал я ему.[120]

Sincerity, alongside truth, is a key category in Pisemskii's understanding of literary aesthetics. Baklanov lacks sincerity and, therefore, substance: having no ideas of his own, he is forever following the latest ideological fashion. The same is the case with Sofi:

> Вы ужасная притворщица! – начал я прямо. – Не может быть, нет! – воскликнула она – У вас все только для наружности, и даже я знаю, что такое в вас искреннее. – Ну, что же во мне есть искреннего, что

[120] Ibid., p. 451.

искреннего? Скажите! – пристала она ко мне. – Сколько могу отгадывать, так любовь к разнообразию.[121]

Baklanov and Sofi in turn blame their creator for the absence of empathy:

Есть-таки, есть холодок и безучастие, – подхватил Бакланов. – А у вас жар, только не ваш, а ветром надутый, – объяснил я ему. – Именно, именно! – подтвердила Софи и, прощаясь, крепко пожала мне руку. 'О, сирена, сирена!.. ' – подумал и я вместе с Евсевием Осиповичем.[122]

'This paragraph is remarkable as a self-conscious rebuke that the author addresses to himself, but also because of its final lines that provide the key for interpreting the scene of literary reading in chapter 7.

In this chapter, Pisemskii-character is the star attraction at Sofi's party. She has arranged a literary reading at which he, a famous author, is presenting his latest work. The choice of a piece to read is not arbitrary: it is an actually existing Pisemskii's novella *Starcheskii grekh* (1860), and it is chosen to convey to Sofi his feelings for her.

Бакланов между тем отнесся к Евсевию Осиповичу – Он будет нам читать свое произведение: 'Старческий грех'. Ливанов опять величественно склонил свою голову – Все, что вышло из-под пера их, мне приятно, – сказал он ласково-обязательным тоном. – Господин Писемский реалист, – сказал Петцолов. Я ничего ему не возразил, а удивился только, что он знает это ученое слово. Читать меня Софи посадила против себя, и при этом я должен был сложить со столика

[121] Ibid., p. 440.

[122] Ibid., p. 451.

‘Петербургские Ведомости’, ‘Современник’ и ‘Русский Вестник’. ‘Странно что-то это’, - думал я.[123]

Sofi’s display of the current periodicals demonstrates that she, following the St Petersburg fashion, pretends to be interested in current events. But Pisemskii-character, once again, sees right through this ‘strange’ arrangement: *Sovremennik* and *Russkii Vetsnik* are at the opposite ends of the ideological spectrum. *Peterburgskie vedomosti,* the oldest Russian newspaper, at that time offered a fairly liberal overview of current affairs in the capital, Russia and in the world. In a typical mise-en-abyme, *Russkii vestnik* is also the journal in which *Vzbalamuchennoe more* was eventually published. The incongruous mix of conservative and progressive journals further emphasises Sofi’s ‘притворство’: she clearly has no coherent views of her own but seeks to demonstrate her awareness of current issues to her guests. Among them, Pisemskii-the character has one ally. Livanov, an old conservative, likes anything Pisemskii wrote, and is a personification of Pisemskii’s ideal reader: intelligent, engaged, firmly backwards looking. Pisemskii is here characterised as a realist – this seems to be how he characterised himself as a writer, an observation also borne out by his correspondence.[124] His remark about ‘learned words’ shows, though, that he is aware of the differences in which writers and lay readers can use the same literary definitions.

The scenes of the reading are symbolic. In order to let Sofi know about his feelings, Pisemskii-character rushes through the novella to get to the love plot. Disappointingly, his audience constantly interrupts and gets excited at all the wrong moments: the depiction of the corrupted Russian school system, images of Jewish moneylenders, bullying by superiors in the army. The only member of the audience

[123] Ibid., p. 434.

[124] Ibid., p. 366.

who is calm and unmoved is Livanov – he is, once again, an ideal reader. If Baklanov, Sofi and their guests can only appreciate masterful descriptions of events that they can relate to, Livanov is capable of abstract thinking. He is, even, perhaps more astute than the author himself:

> Около двадцати уже лет мое авторское самолюбие получает щелчки оттуда и отсюда, и все-таки я не приучил себя наблюдать, как и что вокруг меня происходит. Но видел и подметил все это Евсевий Осипович.[125]

Moreover, Livanov shares Pisemskii's understanding of 'pure realism' as a tool for interpreting reality. Livanov flatteringly assumes that a writer has a deeper knowledge of life than a regular person. 'You, I see, have observed life' [Вот вы, как видно, наблюдали жизнь...],[126] he says, addressing questions about contemporary society to Pisemskii. Aside from being an ideal reader of Pisemskii's texts, Livanov here almost turns into his alter ego. The two agree on philosophical, political and ethical matters, share a fascination with the culture of freemasonry, and articulate similar views on contemporary society and the younger generations. They both are captivated by Sofi, but both are too old for her – hence Pisemskii's choice of novella to read at her party. *Starcheskii grekh* follows the story of the middle-aged civil servant Ferapontov. Smitten with the young but devious Kostyreva, he embezzles government funds to help her out and, when caught, hangs himself. The fictional narrative of *Starcheskii grekh* here maps onto the events described in the scene of the reading, further undermining the text's ontological unity. Like Kostyreva, Sofi is manipulating her older admirers for her own gain: she is only interested in Livanov because he is rich and in Pisemskii because he is famous.

[125] Ibid., p. 436.

[126] Ibid.

Another feature Livanov and Pisemskii-character share is a distaste for lies of any kind. Livanov's main problem with his nephew and Sofi is their shallowness and tendency to adopt fashionable ideas without digesting them: 'what she has, she conceals, and what she shows: that is a lie, it does not come from her soul' [то, что есть в ней, она скрывает, а к чему участвует, то - лжет - того нет у ней в душе].[127] The restrained praise Livanov bestows on Pisemskii is also in agreement with Pisemskii's aesthetic preference for truth over style:

> – Благодарю! – сказал он, обращаясь ко мне: – ваш полет не высок, не орлиный, но не лживый.[128]

Pisemskii-character disappears at the end of chapter 8 and does not feature in rest of the novel. His final act is to see Baklanov and Sofi off at the train station. They are returning to Sofi's estate and he is there to witness their departure. Still an internal focaliser for now, he edges back to the omniscience of the extradiegetic narrator by eavesdropping on Sofi's conversation with her new conquest, Petzolov. This final episode is a metaphor for the narrator's role in the text – he is retreating to a discreet presence behind his characters' backs and turning back to 'the objective method'.

The goodbyes between Pisemskii-character and Baklanov are tender, as befits old friends – they part with tears in their eyes. The short period of Pisemskii-character's presence in the text of the novel ends with a passage that references the beginning of Part Four. The voice of the character merges with the voice of the narrator, lamenting the fate of his poor homeland, which is left in the hands of the new generation of 'lovers of progress' [прогрессисты] who cannot be trusted. These

[127] Ibid., p. 438.

[128] Ibid.

youngsters are not up to Pisemskii's exacting standards: they care for society and are happy to serve it, but, unfortunately, go about it the wrong way. Their heads are empty and ideas are abstract, their speeches are too contrived, and they treat their souls as commodities. The metafictional and ontologically heterogenic fragment of narrative finishes with a declared return to the 'objective' narrative mode: 'перехожу снова к объективному способу'.[129]

This declaration should be considered not just a reference to the novel's fictionalised author-narrator, but also as a comment on realism. For Pisemskii, the word 'objective' had a precise meaning: not affected by personal opinion or impressions; reliable and devoid of interpretation. Thus, returning to external focalization, he aims to reinforce the illusion of the author as a dispassionate chronicler of events, leaving the interpretation to the reader, as opposed to the narrator/character, who is an interpreter and a witness.

A close reading of the six chapters in which the author features alongside his own characters shows that his presence is highly metaphorical. In the scenes analysed above, Pisemskii-character has two distinct functions, and both are realised conceptually and discursively. His first function is that of interpreter. Because the 'objective method' does not allow for a narrator's interpretation of the events, he has to enter his own story in order to help the reader make sense of the events described. In his second role, he witnesses the events in order to give a first-hand account of plot developments. Pisemskii-character quietly observes the debates on aesthetics at Baklanov's house, accompanies Baklanov on his visit to Irodiada in prison, and eavesdrops at Sofi's parting with her young lover at the train station.

[129] Ibid., p. 441.

The novel employs a dynamic focalization pattern. First, an external focaliser (omniscient narrator) presents the story, and then, in Part Five, the external focaliser turns into an internal one when they merge into a character. The effect that these changes in the mode of narration have on the reader is two-fold.

On the one hand, since this metalepsis is embedded in a traditionally realist narrative, the reader, as in the case of Fowles's paradox of omniscience, is comfortable enough not to let this brief deviation destroy the illusion of verisimilitude. On the other hand, the crossing of an ontological boundary creates a disturbing feeling of a lack of difference between the real world and the world of ideas. The main conceptual conflict of the novel is Baklanov's inability to see the difference between an abstract idea and its relevance to contemporary reality. Through the use of metalepsis in the six chapters of Part Five, the same issue is addressed at the structural level. Temporarily turning the external focaliser into an internal one crosses the boundaries between ontological levels in the text and shatters diegetic unity. A 'violation of the semantic threshold of representation',[130] it forces the reader to contemplate the relationship between fiction and reality. Despite the lack of consistency in the use of this narrative device, Pisemskii's decision to keep it in later editions of the novel suggests that its introduction was not arbitrary. In the six chapters of Part Five the main issues of the novel are brought together on the discursive, structural and metaphorical levels.

Vzbalamuchennoe more would not seem out of place among self-consciously Romantic texts of a hundred years earlier or among post-modernist meta-novels a hundred years later. Its publication in the 1860s remains a curious phenomenon that

[130] John Pier, 'Metalepsis', in *living handbook of narratology* <http://wikis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Metalepsis> [accessed 13 August 2016].

challenges our assumptions about the predominantly mimetic nature of the Russian Realist tradition.

4. Conclusion

Despite the fact that *Vzbalamuchennoe more* is one of Pisemskii's most studied texts, it has traditionally been approached reductively, either as an example of the typical nineteenth-century realist novel, or as an anti-nihilist pamphlet. Both of these approaches prioritise proving that the text corresponds to the set of predetermined features, either stylistic or ideological.

However, the chapters analysed in the previous section hold an intrinsic interest as a representative example of nineteenth-century Russian metafiction. Created in a period that has been consistently praised as a Golden Age of the Realist novel, this text is in fact questioning the basic aesthetic assumptions of the realist narrative practice.

In these chapters, Pisemskii was not only putting his theory into practice as he was composing the novel, but also self-reflexively meditated on the process. Symbolically, the majority of conversations between characters in these chapters center on problems of aesthetics and literary styles, the role of literature and criticism in society, and misunderstandings about the nature of literary realism.

The dialogue with the reader that Pisemskii maintained throughout the novel culminated not only in the personification of the author who entered his own narrative, but also in bestowing on a character, who previously featured only in a supporting role, all the attributes of an ideal reader. The old conservative Livanov is attentive, insightful, self-aware, and, most importantly, shares Pisemskii's views and sentiments on progress, history, contemporary society, and the younger generation.

The notions of falsehood and truth, sincerity and pretentiousness, were discussed in *Vzbalamuchennoe more* as both social and aesthetic problems. Pisemskii's political views were thus projected onto his aesthetic theory, which, despite its acknowledged incoherence, can be pieced together not only from his correspondence, articles, and comments on his novels recounted by contemporaries, but also from the use of narrative figures such as metalepsis in his fiction.

Tracing Pisemskii's influence beyond the early twentieth century is problematic, largely due to the restricted access to his texts during the Soviet period.[131] Similarly to Ostrovskii, Pisemskii is acknowledged as a pioneer of Russian realist drama. His other legacy is *Tysiacha dush*, an innovative novel that introduced a new type of character – a man of business [деловой человек][132] – to nineteenth-century Russian fiction. However, *Vzbalamuchennoe more* left a certain mark, too: even if it was not the first antinihilist novel, it definitely defined the genre for years to come, both for writers and critics.

I would argue that the main reason why *Vzbalamuchennoe more* was widely read was not just because it provided a conservative alternative to the aesthetic and political radicalism of his contemporary Nikolai Chernyshevskii. It was precisely the uncanny fusion of aesthetic theory and ideology, exemplified in the novel's metafictional elements, which granted it a short-lived success and long-lasting significance.

[131] For a comprehensive account of Pisemskii's fortunes on the Soviet book market see Jenkins, *A Study*, p. 332.

[132] P. V. Annenkov, *Kriticheskie ocherki* (St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo russkogo khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta, 2000), pp. 179-201.

Chapter Three

Feminist Metafiction: Avdot'ia Panaeva's *Zhenskaia dolia*

1. Introduction

In March 1862, the first part of a novel titled *Zhenskaia dolia* appeared in *Sovremennik*. The publication was signed 'N. Stanitskii' and loyal readers would have been able to recognize a name that had appeared in nearly every issue of the journal for the last fifteen years. Not many of *Sovremennik*'s subscribers knew, however, that 'N. Stanitskii' was in fact a woman, for whom the issues addressed in *Zhenskaia dolia* (or *The Women's Lot*) were a matter not merely of rhetoric but of personal experience.

Avdot'ia Panaeva's (1819-1893) career in *Sovremennik* officially began in 1848 with the publication of a short story 'Neostorozhnoe slovo' already under her chosen pen name 'N. Stanitskii'.[1] Unofficially, she had been contributing to the journal ever since its new editorial team had taken over: the January 1847 volume featured a fashion column that Panaeva wrote together with her husband, Ivan Panaev. *Mody* remained a standing co-authored column in *Sovremennik* until 1857, except for the summer months when Panaev took sole responsibility for it while his wife was away in the country. As recent research shows, Panaeva also assisted the editors with the daily business of running the journal by reviewing and proofreading submitted manuscripts, as well as dealing with financial matters.[2]

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[1] *Sovremennik*, 3 (1848), 65-76. 'Neostorozhnoe slovo' was followed by the publication of an epistolary novella, inspired by George Sand, *Bezobraznyi muzh. Povest' v pis'makh* in the next issue of *Sovremennik*, 4 (1848), 131-58.

[2] 'Mody' was published anonymously throughout the years but the Panaevs have been identified as its authors by V. E. Bograd. V. E. Bograd, *Zhurnal 'Sovremennik', 1847-1866: Ukazatel' soderzhaniia* (Moscow: GIKHL, 1959), p. 515. For more on Panaeva's editorial work see Jehanne M. Gheith,

From 1847 to 1864, Panaeva became an in-house writer and in practice an editorial assistant at *Sovremennik*. In the course of her career she published short stories, novellas and novels (two of which, *Tri strany sveta* (1848) and *Mertvoe ozero* (1851) were co-authored with Nekrasov) and a few anonymous literary reviews printed in *Sovremennik*.[3]

From the beginning, the revived *Sovremennik* published a mix of critical articles and reviews, as well as Russian and translated fiction: the journal declared itself to be ready to 'tackle social questions not with sleep-inducing pedantry but with electrifying fire'.[4] It was understood that the fictional narratives that were published in *Sovremennik* would align themselves with the general radically

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'Redefining the Perceptible: The Journalism(s) of Evgeniia Tur and Avdot'ia Panaeva', in *An Improper Profession: Women, Gender, and Journalism in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. by Barbara T. Norton and Jehanne M. Gheith (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 51-73; A. I. Balandin, 'Panaeva A. Ia.: biobibliograficheskaia spravka' *Russkie pisateli. Biobibliograficheskii slovar'*, ed. by P. A. Nikolaev <http://az.lib.ru/p/panaewa_a_j/text_0020.shtml> [Accessed 20 August 2016]. Marina Ledkovsky, 'Avdotya Panaeva: Her Salon and Her Life', *Russian Literature Triquarterly*, 9 (1974), 426-32 (p. 429), see also her own *Vospominaniia* (Moscow: GIKHL, 1956), pp. 186, 89-90, 252-56, 294, 350. Pisarev's negative review of *Zhenskaia dolia* referred to Panaeva as *Sovremennik*'s 'старый и постоянный сподвижник'. D. I. Pisarev, 'Kukol'naia tragediia s buketom grazhdanskoi skorbi', in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 6 vols (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo F. Pavlenkova, 1894-1907), IV (1894), pp. 147-96 (p. 148).

[3] A significant amount of research has been done on the co-authored works, establishing exactly which chapters were written by Panaeva and which by Nekrasov. We are thus able to examine the evolution of Panaeva's style and the developments of certain topics in her oeuvre. For more on the attribution of these texts, see B. L. Bessonov 'Ob avtorskoi prinadlezhnosti romana "Tri strany sveta"', *Nekrasovskii sbornik,* 6 (1978), 111-30; M. A. Marusenko, 'Atributsiia romanov "Tri strany sveta" i "Mertvoe ozero"', *Vestnik SPbGU*, 1 (1997), 37-52; B. V. Mel'gunov, 'O novykh atributsiiakh romanov "Tri strany sveta" i "Mertvoe ozero"', *Russkaia literatura*, 3 (1998), 98-103.

[4] 'С каждым днем заметно назревают все новые и новые общественные вопросы; надо заняться ими не с снотворным педантизмом, а с огнем, чтобы он наэлектризовал читателей, пробудил в них жажду деятельности.' Panaeva, *Vospominaniia*, p. 153. For a detailed discussion of the journal's first months under Panaev and Nekrasov's management see V. E. Evgen'ev-Maksimov, *'Sovremennik' v 40-50 gg.: ot Belinskogo do Chernyshevskogo* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo pisatelia, 1934), pp. 29-41. For a not entirely accurate but first-hand account of the journal's founding see Panaeva, *Vospominaniia*, pp. 151-60.

progressive ideology of the editorial team. Chernyshevskii had not considered offering *Chto delat'?* to any other journal except the one he used to work for, and similarly, Nekrasov stayed true to the journal's radical ideology by swiftly withdrawing his offer to publish *Vzbalamuchennoe more* as soon as the anti-radical nature of Pisemskii's novel became apparent. In this way, Panaeva's prose, regularly appearing in *Sovremennik* alongside its major publishing coups such as Turgenev's *Zapiski okhotnika* (1849) or Tolstoi's *Sevastopol'skie rasskazy* (1855), had to be relevant to the issues covered in the 'serious departments' of the journal. [5]

Together with her husband and Nekrasov, Panaeva was responsible for providing a steady stream of prose to fill the empty pages appearing in the journal sometimes as late as a few days before it went to press. Because of Russian censorship regulations, every issue of the journal had to be put together and then submitted to a censor for preliminary examination. Often, censors would release the issue too late for the editor to commission new pieces instead of those that had been removed. As a result, editorial boards of popular thick journals had to maintain in-house staff of 'little literary brothers' [меньшей литературной братии] who could be asked to supply texts on short notice.[6]

[5] Pisarev, 'Kukol'naia tragediia s buketom grazhdanskoi skorbi', p. 151.

[6] There is a wealth of sources on Russian censorship regulations of the second half of the nineteenth century. For a descriptions of the rules and regulations specifically in the 1860s see: Robert L. Belknap, 'Survey of Russian Journals, 1840—80' in *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, ed. by Deborah A. Martinsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 91-117 (p. 101-04, 113-14); M. K. Lemke, *Epokha tsenzurnykh reform 1859-1865 godov* (St. Petersburg: Gerold, 1904); A. M. Skabichevskii, *Ocherkii istorii russkoi tsenzury, 1700-1863 g.* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia tovarishchestva "Obshchestvennaia pol'za", 1892), pp. 445-71; Charles Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), pp. 97-137; G. V. Zhirkov, *Istoriiia tsenzury v Rossii XIX-XX vv.* (Moscow: Aspekt press, 2001). For more on the division of roles between 'regular literary workers' [рядовые литературный работники]

As an in-house writer rather than just a contributing author, Panaeva had particular responsibilities: making sure her texts pleased the readers and, perhaps even more importantly, the censors. Panaeva's very first (and some argue, the best) piece of prose, *Semeistvo Tal'nikovykh* (1848),[7] was banned for 'undermining parental authority' and not published until 1928.[8] Subsequently, her novellas continued to center on the problems of women's emancipation but shied away from graphic descriptions of the victim's sufferings that made *Semeistvo Tal'nikovykh* such a powerful work. The in-house writes pledged to write suitable works officially: for example, in order to be able to publish *Tri strany sveta*, Panaeva and Nekrasov had to submit an written promise to the censorship committee, stating that there would be no 'victory of vice' [торжества порока] in their 'generally cheerful and uplifting novel' [роман будет производить впечатление светлое и отрадное].[9]

Zhenskaia dolia was written, much like Panaeva's earlier prose pieces, to be published in *Sovremennik* both as a gap-filler and a crowd-pleaser. Addressing a

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and 'literary generals' [литературные генералы], see V. E. Evgen'ev-Maksimov, *'Sovremennik' pri Chernyshevskom i Dobroliubove* (Leningrad: GIKHL, 1936), p. 5.

[7] Barbara Heldt, 'Gender', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Classic Russian Novel*, ed. by Malcolm V. Jones, Robin Feuer Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 251-70 (p. 259); Beth Holmgren and Jehanne M. Gheith, 'Art and Prostokvasha: Avdot'ia Panaeva's Work', in *The Russian Memoir: History and Literature*, ed. by Beth Holmgren (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), pp. 128-44 (pp. 130-31).

[8] 'Мое первое произведение "Семейство Тальниковых", помещенное в "Альманахе", обратило на себя особое внимание Бутурлина. Он собственноручно делал заметки на страницах: "цинично", "неправдоподобно", "безнравственно", и в заключение подписал: "не позволяю за безнравственность и подрыв родительской власти".' Panaeva, *Vospominaniia*, p. 171. Barbara Heldt also believes that there was a certain gender bias of 'the male censor and the male radical writer […] that left little real scope for the woman writer who wanted to write about actual conditions of physical and psychological abuse within family, the place from which so few women ever emerged into public view'. In Heldt's opinion, the problem was not just the subversion of parental authority, but a subversion of parental authority from a female point of view. For more on her reading of *Semeistvo Tal'nikovykh* see Barbara Heldt, 'Gender', p. 259.

[9] Evgen'ev-Maksimov, *'Sovremennik' v 40-50 gg.: ot Belinskogo do Chernyshevskogo*, pp. 254-5.

burning question of female emancipation, the novel would have already attracted the readers' attention on account of its topic, but Panaeva's style was a distinct advantage. Although ridiculed by contemporary critics as 'heart-rending' [раздирательный],[10] it was very popular with the readers. Most of Panaeva's texts were favoured enough to be re-issued as stand-alone editions soon after they appeared in *Sovremennik* in serialized form.

Panaeva's success with her contemporaries was not surprising: her novels and shorter pieces were written in in a lively, accessible language, dealt with topical and sensationalist themes, and touched upon subjects of sex, incest and madness. Panaeva's emphatic narrators engaged the readers in an almost direct polemic. Even though they patronised the readers slightly, Panaeva's narrators assumed a shared understanding of the troubles of contemporarily society, compassion to the sufferings of women and other vulnerable members of society, and a certain degree of progressiveness that was to be expected from *Sovremennik*'s audience.

Since the Russian reading public was already receptive to ideas and arguments about the situation of contemporary women from their readings of George Sand – a novelist much admired in Russia of the 1840s and 1860s – Panaeva's popularity did not emerge from a vacuum.[11] All three writers discussed in this study had been influenced by George Sand,[12] but Panaeva's novels would have come the closest to

[10] Pisarev, 'Kukol'naia tragediia s buketom grazhdanskoi skorbi', p. 147.

[11] On reception of Sand's works in Russia, see Lesley Herrmann, '*Jacques* in Russia: A Program of Domestic Reform for Husbands', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 12 (1979), 61-72; Carole Karp, 'George Sand and Turgenev: A Literary Relationship', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 12 (1979), 73-81; Ol'ga Demidova, 'Russian Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century', in *Gender and Russian Literature: New Perspective*s, ed. by Rosalind J. Marsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 92-111(pp. 96-100).

[12] For canonical (if ideologically dated) view on George Sand's influence on Chernyshevskii see A. P. Skaftymov, 'Chernyshevskii i Zhorzh Sand', in *N. G. Chernyshevskii. Neizdannye teksty, materialy i*

the readers' expectations of who could be George Sand's Russian equivalent. Even though Panaeva's views on emancipation were far less progressive than Sand's, the general public's appetite for fiction about the 'woman question' (reflected also in the popularity of another woman writer, Charlotte Brontë, in the 1840s and 1850s) would have guaranteed her the reader's initial interest.[13]

Another reason behind Panaeva's success was *Sovremennik*'s clever literary marketing. Considering the journal's radical credentials and its capital of the readers' trust, Panaeva had an opportunity to pitch her texts to a like-minded audience. As a result, publishing her texts was a safe bet for *Sovremennik's* editors, in terms of their potential popularity and ideological compatibility. In 1862, the censorship committee had once again threatened the journal with closure and the editors were counting on the expertise of their in-house writers to produce texts that would be approved by the censors.[14]

Like narrators of Chernyshevskii's *Chto delat'?* and Pisemskii's *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, the narrator of *Zhenskaia dolia* offered the readers self-conscious asides on the nature of literary fiction as art and political weapon. However, the way Panaeva's metanarrative introduced those issues was markedly

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stat'i, ed. by S. Z. Katsenbogen (Saratov: n.p., 1928), pp. 223 – 43. Reprint in A. Skaftymov *Stat'i o russkoi literature* (Saratov: Saratovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1958), pp. 203-27. On Pisemskii and Sand, see Charles A. Moser, *Pisemsky: A Provincial Realist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 197.

[13] For more on the reception of Charlotte Brontë in Russia as well as on the general interest in women writers and women characters see O. R. Demidova, 'The Reception of Charlotte Brontë's Work in Nineteenth-Century Russia', *The Modern Language Review*, 89 (1994), 689-96.

[14] After Panaev's death in 1862, the journal was handed over to Nekrasov. Even though his relationship with the censors examining *Sovremennik* was good, the journal was still excluded from several government subscription lists, such as those of the 'regimental libraries'. For a detailed account of the journal's struggles in 1861-1862 see Evgen'ev-Maksimov, *'Sovremennik' pri Chernyshevskom i Dobroliubove*, pp. 485-507.

different. Aside from the usual difficulties of navigating between the reader's expectations and the censor's restrictions, Panaeva was faced with another problem that was not an issue for the other two writers. One of the very few women playing an important role on the literary scene of the 1860s, she had to present a convincing literary contribution to contemporary debates in which usually only her male colleagues participated.

With its narratorial voice constantly questioning dominant conventions of realist narrative, as well as women's representation in it, Panaeva's novel could be approached as an example of the nineteenth-century feminist metafiction. A woman writer's metafictional discourse traditionally relied on a particular set of narratological devices communicate their message. The message – it this case, an ideological one – could often resemble that of her male colleagues, but would be delivered in a way that was different from that used by male writers.

As Joan Douglas Peters has pointed out in her study *Feminist Metafiction and the Evolution of the British Novel* (2002), the authors of feminist metafiction work generic theory directly into the discourse of their fiction to produce ongoing "underarguments" concerning the novel as a literary genre. These underarguments are performed through women's narrations that are simultaneously and explicitly set off against discursive presentations of existing patriarchal conventions of narrative, objectified textually in the form of literary parody. What results are dialogical discussions of the subject of narration conducted entirely on the level of text.[15]

Panaeva's 'underarguments' concerned the most pressing issues of the day such as the utilitarian uses of literature and the political power of fictional narratives.

[15] Joan Douglas Peters, *Feminist Metafiction and the Evolution of the British Novel* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), p. 2.

In addition, they addressed the problems contemporary critics specifically identified with women's writing, such as excessive attention to detail, character description and weak plotting. Literary parody, a basic device of metafiction, dominated the second half of Panaeva's novel, juxtaposing the narratives of her female characters Sofiia and Anna to the Gogolesque satirical descriptions of male characters.

The ideological positioning of the narrator in Panaeva's text is performed through a complex rhetorical strategy of merging the identity of the narrator with that of his addressees. The narratorial voice in the novel explicitly identifies itself as male and maintains that his text is intended for 'young men's education'.[16] Rhetorically, however, the narrator keeps addressing 'the poor women' suffering from their hard lots in life as well as referring to his addressees as 'we'. This narrative transvestism[17] undermines the established narratorial voice of an objective male observer, as it simultaneously borrows the voice of authority whilst indirectly exposing its limitations. Throughout the novel, the subject and practice of narration are discussed by this unusual narratorial voice, through dialogues with its multiple male and female addressees.

Panaeva's text serves as a third case study in my exploration of metafictional narrative strategies in a limited but representative sample of Russian novels of the 1862-1863. Offering a reading of *Zhenskaia dolia* as feminist metafiction that aimed to 'undermine established discourse within the novel's narrative text',[18] I explore the

[16] N. Stanitskii [A. Ia. Panaeva], 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', *Sovremennik*, 2 (1862), 51-176 (p. 52).

[17] For more on this narrative practice, see Madeleine Kahn, *Narrative Transvestism: Rhetoric and Gender in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). In her study, Kahn explicitly states that she is concerned primarily with male writers adopting female narrative voices, nevertheless, the methodology she develops is universal and can be used to approach the cases of female writers' male narratorial voices.

[18] Peters, *Feminist Metafiction and the Evolution of the British Novel*, p. 11.

similarities in the universal strategies of metanarrative that featured in the works of writers of varying ideological persuasion and literary skill.

In this chapter, I offer a brief discussion of Panaeva's position in the Russian literary canon and an overview of recent research of her life and work in Russian and Western scholarship. Following that, I reconstruct the historical and political context of the novel's publication in 1862 and provide a close reading of *Zhenskaia dolia* as feminist metafiction with a narrative voice that transgresses the boundaries of gender.

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Panaeva's texts were first examined as facts of Russian literary history in the 1920s. In 1927-28, two of her most popular works, *Vospominaniia* (1889) and *Semeistvo Tal'nikovykh*, were reissued by *Academia*, an early Soviet publishing house famous for its historical fiction series. Kornei Chukovskii, the literary critic and a popular children's writer, produced a scholarly edition of *Vospominaniia* for *Academia*. Even though Chukovskii later claimed he had only spent an hour editing Panaeva's text,[19] his research must have taken considerably longer. Not only did he identify the real historical personalities behind the initials Panaeva used (made more confusing by the fact that she attached same initials to different people), he also verified and corrected her multiple chronological errors. Chukovskii first wrote a short essay accompanying the reissued text and then revised it into a larger piece on

[19] 'Взял карандаш, за час взял и выправил всю книгу'. <http://nekrasov.niv.ru/nekrasov/bio/panaeva/ocherk-chukovskogo.htm > [accessed 8 August 2016]. *Vospominaniia* were very popular with readers, and *Academia* republished them four times in 1927-33. The memoirs were first published in installments in *Istoricheskii vestnik* in 1889 and the first separate edition came out in 1890 under the title *Russkie pisateli i artisty*. (A. Ia. Panaeva, *Russkie pisateli i artisty. Vospominaniia A. Ia. Golovachevoi–Panaevoi* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo V. I. Gubinskogo, 1890).

Panaeva's relationship with Nekrasov for his book on the poet that came out the same year.

Chukovskii's treatment of Panaeva is suggestive in many ways. Employing the early Soviet strategy of rehabilitating ideologically unsound texts by ascribing 'progressive' tendencies to their authors, Chukovskii did an admirable job of whitewashing Panaeva's questionable class credentials (coming from a family of successful actors, she was hardly a member of the proletariat). The critic praised 'her democratic way of thinking' [демократический склад ее мыслей][20] and argued that her texts, accessible even for the most unprepared reader, could function as an introduction to the mid-nineteenth-century Russian literary scene. Chukovskii's article, despite its scholarly expertise and lively style, was a typical response to women's writing in Russia: he saw Panaeva as a secondary historical and literary figure, only as interesting as the men she knew and too concerned with the trivialities of life to have produced anything of value.[21]

Even though Panaeva was a published and popular writer, according to the critic, Panaeva's major claim for fame rested on her status as Nekrasov's lover and muse.[22] Equally, in the critic's opinion, Panaeva was first a woman and only then –

[20] K. I. Chukovskii, 'Panaeva i ee vospominaniia', in *Vospominaniia*, ed. by K. I. Chukovskii and N. L. Brodskii (Moscow: GIKHL, 1956), pp. 5-16 (p. 6).

[21] 'Once again, a woman writer stands faulted for excessive details and emotion'. Holmgren and Gheith, 'Art and Prostokvasha: Avdot'ia Panaeva's Work', p. 134.

[22] 'Лучшим памятником Панаевой являются посвященные ей стихотворения Некрасова'. Chukovskii, 'Panaeva i ee vospominaniia', p. 9; 'Ее образ живет на страницах Некрасова. Здесь ее право на память потомства.' K. I. Chukovskii, 'Panaeva' <http://nekrasov.niv.ru/nekrasov/bio/panaeva/ocherk-chukovskogo.htm> [accessed 10 August 2016] Chukovskii also has an earlier 1921 essay specifically on Panaeva as Nekrasov's common law wife, titled *Zhena poeta* and published as part of his series *Nekrasovskaia biblioteka*. See K. I. Chukovskii, *Zhena Poeta (Avdot'ia Iakovlevna Panaeva)* (St. Petersburg: Epokha, 1922). An insightful examination of the discrepancies between the evocations of love in Nekrasov's lyrics and the actual

coincidentally – a writer: 'Charming, universally admired, she was also a novelist, a writer!'[23] Chukovskii suggested, erroneously, that Nekrasov did most of the writing of their co-authored texts and argued that Panaeva became an established writer almost by chance and would have preferred a more traditional womanly occupation.[24]

Chukovskii's patronising assessment of Panaeva's career had a great influence on how Soviet literary studies approached her work. From the 1920s onwards, scholars have mostly treated Panaeva as a writer whose main contribution to Russian literature consisted of providing invaluable information about her male contemporaries.[25] Chukovskii's dismissive attitude and his scathing remarks (he called Panaeva 'simple-minded' [простодушная] as well as 'trivial and shallow' [обывательски-поверхностна] among other things) stuck,[26] and the image of her

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historical circumstances of his relationships with women can be found in Richard Gregg's article, 'A Brackish Hippocrene: Nekrasov, Panaeva, and the "Prose in Love"', *Slavic Review*, 34 (1975), 731-51.

[23] 'Обаятельная, всеми любимая женщина, она вдобавок романистка, писательница!'. K. I. Chukovskii, 'Panaeva i Nekrasov', in *Semeistvo Tal'nikovykh: Povest'*, ed. by N. P. Nekrasov and K. I. Chukovskii (Leningrad: Academia, 1928), pp. 5-79 (p. 8).

[24] Chukovskii's texts abound in such descriptions as: 'Нелегко вообразить, сколько приходилось Некрасову трудиться над исправлением ее повестей и рассказов!'; 'Добрая бабьей, теплой, материнской добротой', 'жалостливая хорошая женщина', 'немудреная простодушная обыкновенная русская женщина';or: 'Ее простенькую, незамысловатую душу всегда влекло к семейному уюту, к материнству. Она ведь была не мадам де Сталь, не Каролина Шлегель, а просто Авдотья, хорошая русская женщина, которая случайно оказалась в кругу великих людей'. K. I. Chukovskii, 'Panaeva' <http://nekrasov.niv.ru/nekrasov/bio/panaeva/ocherk-chukovskogo.htm> [accessed 10 August 2016].

[25] 'Главная ценность же воспоминаний заключается в том, что они повествуют о замечательных русских писателях, группировавшихся вокруг "Современника". В течение многих лет у Панаевой была завидная возможность встречаться с ними изо дня в день.' Chukovskii, 'Panaeva i ee vospominaniia', p. 5.

[26] Ibid., p. 6.

primarily as a hostess of the *Sovremennik* salon and Nekrasov's 'angry muse' rather than a novelist in her own right were perpetuated by generations of scholars.[27]

The interest in Panaeva's work in present-day Russia remains marginal. A number of joint Russian-German research projects in the 1990s introduced Russian scholars to current methodology of women studies.[28] However, Panaeva and her contemporaries attract less scholarly attention than the authors of the twentieth-century 'zhenskaia prosa', partly because basic historiographic and bibliographic data on nineteenth-century Russian women writers is still lacking. An exception to this rule, a 2006 study by S. Tatarkina,[29] offered a historiographical reading of Panaeva's work and examined the poetics of space and subject organization in her fiction, but it remained the sole Russian monograph on Panaeva in recent years.

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[27] See, for example, entries on Panaeva in Soviet literary encyclopedias and dictionaries from 1934 to 1990: P. I. Kaletskii, 'Panaeva A. Ia.', in *Literaturnaia entsiklopediia*, 11 vols (Moscow: OGIZ RSFSR, 1929-39), VIII (1934), p. 421; A. I. Balandin, 'Panaeva A. Ia: Biobibliograficheskaia spravka' <http://az.lib.ru/p/panaewa_a_j/text_0020.shtml> [Accessed 20 August 2016]. Interestingly, Kelly analyses the same effect that Belinskii's criticism of contemporary women writers had on the future reception of their works. Catriona Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing, 1820-1992* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 25-6. A similar attitude can be found in the other two major Soviet studies of Panaeva's work: U. M. Dolgikh, *Zhizn' i literaturnoe tvorchestvo A. Ia. Panaevoi* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Leningradskii gosudarstvennyi pedogagicheskii institut im. A. I. Gertsena, 1977), p. 235; K. S. Kurova, *Literaturnaia deiatel'nost' A. Ia. Panaevoi (Sotrudnichestvo pisatel'nitsy v "Sovremennike")* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Kazakhskii gosudarstvennii universitet im. S. M. Kirova, 1950), p. 190.

[28] I am talking here about research projects that led to the publication of *Potsdam University Frauen Literatur Geshichte* series (*Russkie pisatel'nitsy i literaturnyi protsess v kontse XVIII-pervoi treti XX vv.: sbornik nauchnykh statei,* ed. by M. Sh. Fainshtein (Wilhelmshorst: F. K. Göpfert, 1995*); Russland aus der Feder seiner Frauen: Zum femininen Diskurs in der russischen Literatur*: *Materialien des am 21/22 Mai 1992 im Fachbereich Slavistik der Universität Potsdam durchgeführten Kolloquiums* (Munich: O. Sagner, 1992); *Vieldeutiges nicht-zu-ende-sprechen: Thesen und Momentaufnahmen aus der Geschichte russischer Dichterinnen* (Fichtenwalde: Göpfert, 2002)), as well as the joint publication of the University of Freiburg and the Tver' State University, *Zhenskii vyzov: russkie pisatel'nitsy XIX –nachala XX veka* (Tver': Liliia Print, 2006).

[29] S. V. Tatarkina, *Tvorchestvo A. Ia. Panaevoi v literaturnom kontekste epokhi: gendernyi aspect* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Tomskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2006).

In the West, Panaeva studies are a minor but lively field. One of the first article-length studies on Panaeva in English was published by Marina Ledkovsky in 1974.[30] Ledkovsky examined Panaeva's involvement with the salon at *Sovremennik* and the effect this occupation had on her writing career. A well-established woman writer of the period, Panaeva is usually featured in surveys of nineteenth-century women writers by scholars such as Mary F. Zirin, Joe Andrew, Hilde Hoogenboom, Arje Rosenholm, Dmitrii Ravinskii, Olga Demidova, Rosalind Marsh, Carole Karp and others.

In 1998, Barbara Heldt chose Panaeva's *Semeistvo Tal'nikovykh* as one of the three case studies (alongside Karolina Pavlova's *Dvoinaia zhizn'* (1848) and Liudmila Petrushevskaiia's *Vremia noch'* (1992)) in her chapter on gender in *The Cambridge Companion to Classic Russian Novel*.[31] Panaeva's texts, Heldt argued, belonged to the alternative Russian novelistic tradition established by women writers. In their narratives, women employed modes of irony and lament, directly opposed to the male tendency to prophesise and preach. What was perceived by the traditional scholars as a narrative deficiency or a conscious choice on behalf of the women writers, Heldt saw as an inevitable consequence of the unequal distribution of power between men and women on the mid-nineteenth-century Russian literary scene.

In a similar vein, Panaeva featured in Jane Costlow's study of the way the female emancipation was represented in women writers' texts.[32] Costlow discussed the male critics' dismissive attitude to the women writers' efforts to write about the emancipation and offered a new reading of Dmitrii Pisarev's review of *Zhenskaia*

[30] Marina Ledkovsky, 'Avdotya Panaeva: Her Salon and Her Life', pp. 426-32.

[31] Barbara Heldt, 'Gender', pp. 251-70.

[32] Jane Costlow, 'Love, Work, and the Woman Question in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing', in *Women Writers in Russian Literature*, ed. by Toby W. Clyman and Diana Greene (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 66-76.

dolia. *Semeistvo Tal'nikovykh*, as well as *Zhenskaia dolia*, were further examined in the context of the women's liberation movement in Catriona Kelly's major study *A History of Russian Women's Writing 1820-1992*.[33]

The leading contemporary Panaeva scholar, Jehanne Gheith, has dedicated a number of articles to different aspects of Panaeva's work, from her journalism to the poetics of her memoirs and early prose. Gheith's and Holmgren's essay on Panaeva in Beth Holmgren's edited volume on the Russian memoir is an astute and informative piece, re-evaluating the place of *Vospominaniia* in the Russian literary canon. The scholars examined Panaeva as an 'illustrative case'[34] and offered an insightful close reading of *Semeistvo Tal'nikovykh*. Gheith's later study *Redefining the Perceptible: The Journalism(S) of Evgeniia Tur and Avdot'ia Panaeva* used archival documents to reconstruct Panaeva's exact involvement in the daily running of *Sovremennik*.

From the 1920s onwards, scholars have explored Avdot'ia Panaeva's text primarily in the historical context of her career: in her role as a hostess of the *Sovremennik* salon and, more recently, as a celebrated woman writer. Her autobiographical texts, *Vospominaniia* and *Semeistvo Tal'nikovykh*, remain Panaeva's most studied pieces. *Zhenskaia dolia*, despite its importance as the most resonant 1862 political novel by a woman writer,[35] continues to be largely unexplored in terms of its poetics and narrative mode.

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[33] Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing, 1820-1992*, pp. 62, 67, 69.

[34] Holmgren, Gheith, 'Art and Prostokvasha: Avdot'ia Panaeva's Work', p. 129.

[35] It was briefly discussed in Soviet scholarship of the period. See E. G. Bushkanets, 'N. G. Chernyshevskii i pisateli-demokraty', in *N. G. Chernyshevskii. Stat'i, issledovaniia i materialy*, ed. by E. I. Pokusaev (Saratov: Saratavskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1958), pp. 105-54; K. S. Kurova, 'Tvorchestvo A. Ia. Panaevoi v 60-e gody', *Uchenye zapiski KGU: Iazyk i literatura*, 14 (1952), 39-58.

2. Publishing *Zhenskaia dolia*: Woman Writers and the Woman Question in the 1860s

Zhenskaia dolia was published in *Sovremennik* in three installments, from March through to May 1862. Like the rest of Panaeva's fiction, this novel was explicitly concerned with what in Russia since 1855 has been referred to as *The Woman Question*. Reflecting their readers' concerns, the thick journals of the 1860s offered an array of non-fictional texts about women's rights as well as fiction on the same topic,[36] and *Zhenskaia dolia* was precisely the kind of politically engaged literary text *Sovremennik* usually published. The novel was popular with the readers and was soon published in a stand-alone edition in 1864.

Typically for a popular novelist, success among readers did not guarantee Panaeva the critics' favour. A fellow woman writer Nadezhda Khvoschchinskaia commended the author for her 'passion' and her almost 'painful feeling of empathy', but characterised the style of *Zhenskaia dolia* as 'rude', 'abrupt' and 'full of caricatures'.[37] One of the most scathing reviews was published by Dmitrii Pisarev in *Russkoe slovo* in 1864, and its opening paragraph is worth quoting in full:

> В каждой из наших журнальных партий есть неисправимые фразеры, которым никогда в жизни не случалось произвести на свет ни

[36] Catriona Kelly, 'The First-Person 'Other': Sof'ia Soboleva's 1863 Story 'Pros and Cons' (I Pro, i Contra)', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 73 (1995), 61-81 (p. 62).

[37] 'Но под этой грубой работой - всегда убеждение; это набрасывание - неизбежное последствие жаркого желания сказать скорее, сказать все; в этих резкостях всегда много житейской правды, поднятой не с намерением щегольнуть словами, а с болезненным чувством участия и негодования, чувством прямым, смелым и искренним.' V. Porechnikov [N. D. Khvoshchinskaia], 'Provintsial'nye pis'ma o nashei literature. Pis'mo tret'e. "Zhenskaia dolia", roman Stanitskogo (Sovremennik, №3), "Otstalaia", povest' g-zhi Zhadovskoi (Vremia, №12)', *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 5 (1862), 37-38. For a very brief overview of the novel's reception see also O. A. Kuiantseva, 'Interpretatsiia romana A. Ia. Panaevoi "Zhenskaia dolia" v kritike i literaturovedenii', *Visnik LNU im. Tarasa Shevchenka*, 3/214 (2011), 148-152.

одной самостоятельной мысли. Эти господа в своих произведениях самым усердным и добросовестным образом обеспечивают ту идею, которая дает им насущный хлеб, но этим не ограничивается их деятельность. По самолюбию, свойственному всякой бездарности, они непременно желают высказывать руководящую идею "своими словами", изобретают сами различные приставки и украшения, воплощают идею в карикатурные образы и наконец доводят ее до такого жалкого бессилия.… […] Много у нас таких беллетристов, и велики труды их, но, мне кажется, в этом отношении никто не может сравниться с г. Станицким, по милости которого почтенный "Современник" так часто нагружается раздирательными романами. […] Изучение г. Станицкого особенно интересно для нас потому, что этот писатель постоянно работает для "Современника" и постоянно уродует своим фразерством светлые и широкие идеи, которые развивали в этом журнале действительно мыслящие и дельные люди.[38]

Pisarev criticized the absence of logic in Panaeva's political arguments, but his most vicious attack was directed at her style: she was too effusive ('фразер, маскирующий свою умственную бедность криком и жестикуляциею'), too concerned with inconsequential details ('в развитии подробностей г. Станицкий еще более прелестен, чем в общей концепции своих произведений'), and too fiery ('мысли как-то плохо вяжутся между собой, но зато пылкости очень много'[39]).

Pisarev and Panaeva were personally acquainted and he was fully aware of a real personality of mysterious Stanitskii. Pisarev's attack on the in-house writer of a

[38] Pisarev, 'Kukol'naia tragediia s buketom grazhdanskoi skorbi', p. 147.

[39] Ibid., pp. 147, 50.

leading radical journal reflects the uneasy relationship between *Sovremennik* and *Russkoe slovo*, further complicated by Pisarev's personal ambition to be considered Dobroliubov's intellectual heir. However, a close reading of this passage shows that Pisarev was questioning more than Panaeva's literary skills and radical credentials. His problem with her was more fundamental – it was the fact that Panaeva was a woman and, as such, unable to offer a worthy contribution to either realist fiction or to the ongoing debates on the woman question.

Pisarev's 'Kukol'naia tragediia s buketom grazhdanskoi skorbi' (1864) was representative of the general reaction of the male critics. Ironically, they maintained that women did not contribute as much as they should to the discussion of the woman question, and when they did, they did not do it properly. Pisarev's and later Nikolai Shelgunov's problem with women writers was that none of them had created a character as vocal or liberated as Chernyshevskii's Vera Pavlovna.[40] One of the reasons why women writers did not succeed in this undertaking was the style of their prose, which differed from the narrative modes chosen by their male counterparts. In his article, Pisarev essentially accused Panaeva of writing a wrong kind of realist fiction: overwrought ('пересоленный реализм') and therefore not successful.[41]

[40] 'Для Веры Павловны из романа "Что делать?" даже немыслимы те огорчения, от которых зачахла Софья Григорьевна. Вера Павловна может быть счастливою, потому что она сама знает, в чем она нуждается, сама умеет контролировать свои желания и сама отыскивает средства для удовлетворения этим желаниям'. Ibid., p. 176. For similar observations, see N. V. Shelgunov, 'Zhenskoe bezdushie: Po povodu sochinenii V. Krestovskogo-psevdonima', *Delo*, 9 (1870), 1-34. Pisarev also discussed the woman question in Pisarev, 'Zhenskie tipy v romanakh i povestyakh Pisemskogo, Turgeneva i Goncharova', in *Sochineniia*, pp. 480-528.

[41] 'Г. Станицкий не сообщает нам, какую эпитафию изобразили на памятнике лютого дедушки, но, по всей справедливости, эпитафию следовало бы составить так: "Здесь лежит несчастная жертва неудавшегося реалиста"'. Pisarev, 'Kukol'naia tragediia s buketom grazhdanskoi skorbi', pp. 184.

Pisarev does not explicitly state that the author is a woman and not all of his readers would have been aware of Stanitskii's actual identity, but many of those he was polemicising with in this article – other critics – would have known Panaeva personally through their dealing with *Sovremennik* or her literary salon. As Jane Costlow noted, even if Pisarev's judgement was fair in terms of aesthetics, it was still 'suspiciously gendered':[42] throughout the article his criticism of Panaeva was couched in derogative terms traditionally used to denigrate feminine writing as irrational and too concerned with details of everyday life. Moreover, 'the metaphors he uses to describe the 'debasement' of lofty ideas are all associated either with domestic realm or with (purported) feminine aesthetics: '[second-rate authors'] novels are usually sewn with living threads according to the latest fashionable patterns'; people and events are reflected in a 'cheap mirror'; Dobroliubov's ideas are distorted with 'innocent gossip'.[43]

Among Panaeva's supposed transgressions, according to Pisarev, was that she debased the serious arguments of her male colleagues. Even the title of his review pointed out Panaeva's unsuitability to discussions of serious matters: the tragedy of Panaeva's characters is doll-like [кукольная] and her political arguments are referred to as a 'bouquet of civic concerns' [букет гражданской скорби]. The critic compared Panaeva's writing to works by 'actually intelligent and worthwhile individuals' and declared it unworthy of *Sovremennik.*

Indeed, constrained social experience of mid-nineteenth-century Russian women writers limited the number of topics they could comfortably address in their work. It affected the choice of subjects, characters, setting and style that often

[42] Jane Costlow, 'Love, Work, and the Woman Question in Mid-Nineteenth Century Women's Writing', p. 64.
[43] Ibid.

emphasised the need to escape from confined surroundings.[44]As Mary Zirin noted, this 'intimate focus was increasingly regarded by prescriptive critics as a retrograde clinging to Romantic egocentrism when the times called for scientifically based, objective – "masculine", "realistic" – depictions of broad cross-sections of life'.[45]

The debates around the woman question in the Russian press had been conducted mostly by men such as radical critics Shelgunov, Dobroliubov, Pisarev, Mikhaikovskii and Chernyshevskii. At the same time, the number of women writers in mid nineteenth-century Russia was higher than ever before. Because of the commercialization and further professionalization of literature in this period, there was a viable market for fiction to which women contributed as authors of novellas, novels and short stories. This lucrative market depended on them, and the advances paid to writers such as Nadezhda Khvoschchinskaia or Evgeniia Tur equaled and sometimes exceeded the hefty sums paid to their male colleagues.[46]

Most women writers, however, lived in the provinces and were not a part of the literary establishment of the two capitals. Historically, it was also uncommon for women to engage in contemporary debates on social and aesthetic issues directly since formal polemic was seen as a male domain. As a result, their literary texts 'functioned as a channel for female intellectual expression' as well as a means of joining 'the debate on the destiny ('prednaznachenie') of the new woman'.[47]

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[44] Catriona Kelly identifies two main varieties of Russian women's writing of the 1840-1860s as 'the provincial tale' and 'the escape plot'. Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing, 1820-1992*, pp. 59-79.

[45] Mary Fleming Zirin, 'Women's Prose Fiction in the Age of Realism', in *Women Writers in Russian Literatur*e, pp. 77-94 (p. 78).

[46] Jehanne M. Gheith, *Finding the Middle Ground: Krestovskii, Tur, and the Power of Ambivalence in Nineteenth-Century Russian Women's Prose* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2004), p. 17.

[47] Arja Rosenholm, 'The 'Woman Question' of the 1860s and the Ambiguity of the "Learned Woman"', in *Gender and Russian Literature: New Perspectives*, pp. 112-29 (p. 118). One major

Questioning the constrained role of women in society and the rhetoric of dominance, these texts also tested the boundaries of realist narrative. In these cases, metanarrative served as a rhetorical means for women writers to integrate their political or aesthetic argument into a fictional narrative.

An example of such integration can be seen, for instance, in the texts of Maria Zhukova, a prolific writer of the 1840s. As several scholars had pointed out, in her novellas Zhukova created a 'narrutopia' – a kind of narrative which solipsistically offers a model of the world as a whole within a literary text.[48] Her 'metaliterary concerns'[49] found their expression in her fiction and functioned as an indirect contribution to contemporary polemics about literary language and narrative form.

As recent research indicates, there were indeed women journalists, reporters and editors in mid-nineteenth-century Russia who ran their own journals and contributed to leading publications of the time.[50] However, only a very small number

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exception from this rule was Khvoshchinskaia's theory of realism, discussed in detail in Hilde Hoogenboom, '"Ya rab deistvitel'nosti": Nadezha Khvoschchinskaia, Realism, and the Detail', in *Vieldeutiges nicht-zu-ende-sprechen*, pp. 129-49. For more on the nineteenth-century women writers constraints see Mary Fleming Zirin, 'Women's Prose Fiction in the Age of Realism', p. 78. Zirin notes that Panaeva was 'a rare woman writer who lived in St. Petersburg, and her career was furthered by personal connections' (p.78), as does Gheith, in Holmgren and Gheith, 'Art and Prostokvasha: Avdot'ia Panaeva's Work', p. 129.

[48] Joe Andrew, 'Telling Tales: Zhukova as Metaliterary Author', in *Vieldeutiges Nicht-Zu-Ende-Sprechen: Thesen und Momentaufnahmen aus der Geschichte russischer Dichterinnen*, ed. by Arja Rosenholm and Frank Göpfert (Fichtenwalde: Göpfert, 2002), pp. 113-29. For more on metanarrative in Zhukova, see Svetlana Slavskaya Grenier, 'Becoming a Subject: Beyond the Objectifying Male Gaze (Zhukova's *The Locket* and *Self-Sacrifice*)', in Svetlana Slavskaya Grenier, *Representing the Marginal Woman in Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature: Personalism, Feminism, and Polyphony* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 33-61.

[49] Hilde Hoogenboom, 'The Society Tale as Pastiche: Maria Zhukova's Heroines Move to the Country', in *The Society Tale in Russian Literature: From Odoevskii to Tolstoi*, ed. by Neil Cornwell (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 85-97 (p. 96).

[50] The collection of articles *An Improper Profession: Women, Gender, and Journalism in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. by Barbara T. Norton and Jehanne M. Gheith (Durham, NC: Duke University

of these women were able to overcome the (sometimes self-imposed) barrier between them and open forums of public debate on pressing political, social and aesthetic issues. As Naomi Schor noted, 'there exists as yet no clearly constructed and readily available corpus of female-authored aesthetic discourse to read in conjunction with the male'.[51] Women's aesthetic discurse traditionally had other outlets such as salons and private correspondence – a limitation that feminist metafiction was set to challenge.

Panaeva's husband, Ivan Panaev held a literary salon prior to his marriage and his wife assumed the duties of its hostess once they had moved to St. Petersburg.[52] It

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Press, 2001), mentioned above, reports recent findings on the work not only of Evgeniia Tur and Panaeva, but also less well-known figures such as Anna Volkova (Adele Lindenmeyer, 'Anna Volkova: From Merchant Wife to Feminist Journalist', in *An Improper Profession*, pp. 120-40), Maria Chekhova, Liubov' Gurevich, Maria Pokrovskaia (Linda Edmondson,'Maria Pokrovskaia and *Zhenksii Vestnik*: Feminist Separatism in Theory and Practice', ibid., pp. 196-222), Ekaterina Kuskova (Barbara T. Norton, 'Journalism as a Means of Empowerment: The Early Career of Ekaterina Kuskova', ibid., pp. 222-49) and others. For a list of women journalists in Imperial Russia, see *An Improper Profession,* pp. 281-311.

[51] Naomi Schor, 'Rereading in Detail: Or, Aesthetics, the Feminine, and Idealism', *Criticism*, 32.3 (1990) < http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/criticism/vol32/iss3/3/> [accessed 12 August 2016]. For Schor's thought on theory of Realism in the writings of the French realist women writers see Naomi Schor, *Breaking the Chain: Women, Theory, and French Realist Fiction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). In her article on Khvoshchinskaia's thoughts on Realism Hilde Hoogenboom briefly addressed this problem. The scholar argued that by 1860 Khvoschinskaia was going through an aesthetic crisis. Khvoschinskaia was preoccupied with developing solutions for a 'fundamental challenge for realist writing, the relation between details and an idea or the ideal'. It was not a coincidence that this particular aspect of realist writing has attracted her attention. As Hoogenboom notes, 'critics from Belinskii onwards primarily accused women writers of focusing on either details or ideals, at the expense of the whole' (Hoogenboom, 'Ya rab deistvitel'nosti. Nadezhda Khvoschinskaia, Realism, and the Detail', p. 129). Hoogenboom identified Khvoshchinskaia's letters, fiction and literary criticism, as an example of a corpus of texts suggested by Schor.

[52] For more on Ivan Panaev's 'frequent and well-attended evening meetings' [частые и многолюдные собрания по вечерам], that brought together 'litterateurs and other people of their general acquaintance, claiming ties with literature' [литераторы, а также прилепившиеся к литературе и вообще знакомые], see *Literaturnye kruzhki i salony*, ed. by M. I. Aronson and S. A. Reiser (Leningrad: Priboi, 1929), pp. 235-37.

was noted by the salon's guests and reflected in her memoirs that Panaeva actively participated in the literary debates that took place there. Topics discussed at the salon ranged from practical issues of literary production to the nature of realism and Romanticism.[53] However, her thoughts on these subjects can be reconstructed only by analysing her fiction.

Equally, even though most of Panaeva's texts are explicitly concerned with problem of female emancipation, her interest in the topic was never expressed in a non-fictional form. Despite the fact that she was passionate about this issue, her access to formal outlets for her opinions was narrower than that of her male colleagues. Panaeva worked at *Sovremennik* together with Chernyshevskii and was involved in the discussions of the journal's political stance. Like Pisemskii, by 1862 she was an established writer with a certain confidence in handling her audience, as well as a recognizable style and name. Panaeva burned most of her correspondence,[54] but it seems that the absence of any other secondary texts in her oeuvre is a result of historical circumstances rather than personal choice.

Zhenskaia dolia contains elements of metanarrative similar to those found in *Chto delat'?* and *Vzbalamuchennoe more*: authorial asides debating the nature of realism, literary language and form, the use of detail and character descriptions. The ontological shift between fiction and reality is not questioned as explicitly as in the other two novels, but the self-conscious narrator's constantly verbalised preoccupation with the power of fictional narrative and its influence on politics and everyday life is a clear indication of the presence of metafictional elements in the

[53] A thematic analysis of the conversations usually held at Panaeva's salon can be found in Ledkovsky, 'Avdotya Panaeva: Her Salon and Her Life', pp. 426-7.

[54] A small cache of remaining letters to Nekrasov had been discovered and published in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 53-54 (1949), 117-130.

novel's poetics. The use of literary parody as means of metanarrative in *Zhenskaia dolia* highlights how questioning the place of women of society was fused with challenging the premises of the dominant style of contemporary realist fiction.

This challenge was not specific to the Russian literary scene of the 1860s. In her study *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (1999), Margaret Cohen convincingly argued that realism as a style and realist novel as a genre had been intentionally 'masculinised' in the French debates 1840s-1850s of the validity of various literary methods. In these debates, Realism was opposed to Sentimentalism and the sentimental novel that had been reframed as a feminine genre. When attacked, Cohen claimed, 'realist works assert their claims to literary importance by identifying the novel with men, by forging a poetics associated with masculine forms of knowledge, and by undercutting the authority of the woman writer along with sentimental codes'.[55]

In a later study, Cohen 'excavated', as she put it, a particular novelistic form that flourished in France during the July Monarchy but was not recognized as a part of the French realist canon alongside the texts by Balzac and Stendhal. Cohen identified this form as a 'feminine social novel', not necessarily written by women but thematically concerned with socially-induced female suffering. Counteracting the masculine realist tradition, these novels relied on a different narrative dynamic and introduced a particular plot structure. A few of the Russian novels dealing with the

[55] Margaret Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 195.

woman question, including *Zhenskaia dolia,* closely resembled Cohen's 'feminine social novels' in their narrative dynamic and plot structure.[56]

In *Zhenskaia dolia* Panaeva created a particular type of feminist metafiction that owed its existence only partly to her writing style and largely to historical circumstances. Similarly to other women writers of the period, she was 'finding a way as a woman to negotiate the particular nature of the Russian literary political scene'[57] – a strategy that emphasizes the universal rather than specific character of the narrative structure featured in *Zhenskaia dolia*.

3. *Zhenskaia dolia* as Feminist Metafiction

A novel in two parts, *Zhenskaia dolia* tells the story of the equally unhappy fates of several women of different ages, classes, backgrounds and dispositions. What unites these women are the tragedies inflicted on them by the men in their lives: treacherous and abusive lovers, husbands, fathers, grandfathers, employers and even evil travel-companions.

The novel's 'thematic attention to the feminine condition as a social problematic'[58] and 'women's "sufferings" wreaked by all manner of social

[56] Other texts of a similar type included Nadezhda Khvoshchinskaia's *Pansionerka* (1861), Sof'ia Soboleva's *Bezvykhodnoe polozhenie* (1864), Marko Vovchok's *Sasha* (1859), *Zhivaia dusha* (1868) and others.

[57] Hoogenboom, p. 134. Hoogenboom used Cohen's methodology in her exploration of Khvoshchinskaia's critical legacy on the theory of realism, whereas Gheith explored its uses for contextualising the aesthetic judgment of women's fiction in the mid-nineteenth-century literary establishment. Gheith, *Finding the Middle Ground*, p. 14.

[58] Margaret Cohen, 'Preface: Reconfiguring Realism', in *Spectacles of Realism: Body, Gender, Genre*, ed. by Margaret Cohen and Christopher Prendergast (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. vii-xiii (p. x).

pressures'[59] is immediately apparent from its title. 'Dolia' in Russian is rarely used to describe a happy fate, and mostly refers to 'heavy lots' [тяжелая доля]. The expression also presupposes certain fatalism – 'dolia' cannot be chosen, it's something one has to bear. Panaeva's title lets readers know that this is a text about the tragedy of a Russian woman's lot. Most of Panaeva's texts tell stories of victims: of parental tyranny in *Semeistvo Tal'nikovykh* and then the tyranny of men in *Bezobraznyj muzh, Neobdumannyj shag, Stepnaya baryshnia, Domashii ad, Sashka* and other novellas, and *Zhenskaia dolia* is no exception.

The plot and narrative dynamics of the feminine social novel in *Zhenskaia dolia* function as a narrative structure for Panaeva's feminist metafiction, exploring the issues of female emancipation in society and testing the boundaries of the literary aesthetics of realism. As much as her novel is debating the issues of women's emancipation as defined by men, the metanarrative in the novel questions the nature of realism as defined by the male writers.

According to Margaret Cohen, a typical feminine social novel was deliberately constructed in opposition to the popular male-authored texts of the period and employed 'alternative narrative strategies'.[60] If novels by male authors relied on a conventional narrative dynamic outlined by Roland Barthes ('to narrate (in the classic fashion) is to raise the question as if it were a subject which one delays predicating; and when the predicate (truth) arrives, the sentence, the narrative, are over, the world is adjectivized'), the feminine social novel exposed the truth of the matter at the beginning. In the feminine social novel, 'the origin of the narrative is a pronouncement of women's social situation as it should and should not be. The

[59] Margaret Cohen, 'In Lieu of a Chapter on Some French Women Realist Novelists', in *Spectacles of Realism*, pp. 90-119 (p. 93).

[60] Ibid., p. 90.

novels proclaim this truth from their opening words, inscribing it on their covers, in titles […] where the narrator addresses the reader directly and/or uses scenes peopled by recognizable social types to do the didactic work'.[61]

The opening scene in *Zhenskaia dolia* offers the readers just such a tableau of female types: a loving mother, neglected by her philandering husband, her innocent daughter, and a busy-body noisy neighbour. The 'novelistic universe [is called] into being with a minimum of physical details'[62] from which the location and social standing of the protagonists are immediately apparent. Most importantly, the company we are introduced to is exclusively female: 'В полдень жаркого, летнего дня, в селе Григорьевке, в барском саду, в густой аллее из акации, укрывалось от зноя небольшое дамское общество'.[63]

The typical conflict of a feminine social novel is often sparked by a collision of the social and the private spheres of a character's life. Exactly this kind of conflict germinates in chapter one of *Zhenskaia dolia*. The introduction is followed by a discussion between the ladies, in which the guest, Varvara Karpovna, functions as the agent of the social sphere, insisting that her host's daughter should be married and soon. The host, Anna Antonovna, on the other hand, is guarding her private values: she wants to educate her daughter before marrying her off. The social here is intruding onto the private female world, producing a conflict of opinions: the progressive feminist ideas of the private and the exploitative traditions of the social.

Further contrast between those two worlds is exemplified in the apparent differences between the two arguing ladies: 'наружностью дамы очень резко

[61] Ibid., p. 94.

[62] Ibid., p. 113.

[63] Stanitskii, 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', p. 41.

отличались друг от друга'.[64] Anna Antonovna, is, naturally, beautiful and noble even though the suffering she has experienced has left its mark. Her adversary is healthy and untroubled by worries, which gives her an almost animal look of 'limited intelligence and oxen nerves'.[65] The host is simply [незатейливо] dressed and wrapped in a shawl, as if it were autumn, whereas her guest is bothered by the heat despite wearing just a crumpled blouse and no bonnet. Panaeva's heavy-handed symbolism leaves her readers in no doubt of who of these two characters deserves their sympathy and attention.

The first chapter introduced the lead character, Anna Antonovna's young daughter Sofiia. As befits the heroine of the feminine social novel, Sofiia is set up to experience a traumatic event resulting from the further collision of the social and the private. The reader first meets her while she sits quietly, reading, and staring into the distance with her eyes 'full of some kind of anxious longing'[66] in the company of her mother. The mother-daughter dyad, a typical character unit of this genre, is opposed to the figure of the antagonistic father, who had abandoned his family. Panaeva's plotting is not sophisticated but her eye for psychological detail helps her to create complex and compelling characters, demonstrating her expertise as an author of popular novellas.

The feminine idyll is broken up when Sofiia is married off by her father to Petr, a young man with progressive pretensions. He praises female emancipation and promises Sofiia a life of enlightened happiness. After their marriage, Petr takes Sofiia to his estate where she quickly realizes her mistake. Petr's tyrannical

[64] Ibid.

[65] 'Она точно за двоих дышала избытком здоровья и спокойствия, избытком, придававшим ее лицу то тупоумное, животное выражение, которым всегда отличаются люди с ограниченным умом и воловьими нервами.' Ibid.

[66] 'Ее живые голубые глаза были полны какой то тревожной тоски.' Ibid., p. 42.

grandfather runs the estate with an iron hand and the rest of the family – Petr's aunt and two uncles – are determined to break up the two lovers.

As Sofiia gets acquainted with her new family, new victims of the traditional women's lot appear: young 'prizhivalka' Olimpiada is gradually revealed to be the grandfather's illegitimate daughter and the old house servant turns out to be the grandfather's former lover, cast out by her family because of their affair. Petr's sometime serf mistress, who has born him an illegitimate son, also resides on the estate.

Sofiia tries to keep her faith in her young husband and make a life for herself in these new circumstances. However, when Petr moves to the city to be with his new mistresses and abandons her in the country with his mentally ill nephew as her only friend, Sofiia gives up all hope. Later on in the second part of the novel, we learn that she has left her husband for a wealthy landowner Lakotnikov, who is virtually her husband's double. At the beginning of Part Two, she has born Lakotnikov illegitimate children and lives with him in the country as his mistress.

The second part of the novel offers an urban parallel to Sofiia's nightmarish rural existence, introducing another set of characters. Anna, the second part's leading character, is the illegitimate daughter of a young woman seduced and abandoned by her treacherous lover. She has been adopted and brought up by her godfather, a benevolent stranger who saved her from the orphanage. The readers meet Anna in medias res, in a travelling carriage: Anna, returning from abroad where she had been working as a lady's companion, is going to the country to join her godfather. At the coaching inn, an old lusty general is offering her unwanted attentions but Anna is saved by the novel's single positive male hero, Aleksandr Snegov.

The Anna and Sofiia plots soon merge: the young woman's destination is Lakotnikov's estate where her godfather is employed as a manager. The two women become friends, but Lakotnikov soon starts pursuing Anna and casts Sofiia out. After that, both plot lines resolve swiftly: Sofiia, abandoned both by her husband and Lakotnikov, dies in poverty and Anna follows Snegov to Siberia where he has been exiled for opposing Lakotnikov and the old general. They open a school in Irkutsk and live an 'active life' [жизнь у них деятельная].[67] The resolution is abrupt: typically for the feminine social novel, the absence of the tension between the two narrative codes, (the proairetic one of the story and hermeneutic one of its interpretation) produces an ending in which the conflict is not resolved but is made irrelevant.

The novel's setting falls into two parts, rural and urban. Sofiia inhabits the world of country estates, whereas Anna comes from a Dostoevskian world of urban poverty. The contrast between the two showcases Panaeva's skill in creating idyllic backdrops for society tales (honed while working on her earlier novellas) as well as her ability to follow the period's fashion for naturalist descriptions of the city life.

Petr's estate, run by his maniacal grandfather, is described as a locus of novelistic gothic. The house, run by the villainous grandfather, is juxtaposed with the estate's gardens as the only place of calm. The daunting, menacing atmosphere of this secluded space is created through the use of narrative ellipses: sexual deviations and violence, such as incest and rape, are hinted at but never confirmed; the nature of the horrific events at a distant farm where Petr's serf mistress dies in exile is never named.

[67] N. Stanitskii [A. Ia. Panaeva], 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' vtoraia. Okonchanie', *Sovremennik*, 5 (1862), 209-50 (p. 249).

With its gothic gloom and a terrifying villain, Panaeva's description of Petr's estate foreshadows the later gothic nightmare of Saltykov-Shchedrin's *Gospoda Golovlevy* (1875-1880). As a household run by a tyrannical man, it is contrasted with the idyllic picture of an estate run by Sofiia's mother, described in the opening chapters of the novel. Through a symbolic metonymy, Panaeva is making a progressive statement about women's ability to manage not just households but profitable country estates. Even though at the time it was not uncommon for women in Russia to own and manage large estates, they were often legally more vulnerable than men. Sofiia's mother attempts to reform her estate and liberate the serfs but her husband puts a quick end to it by declaring her insane and therefore legally incapable. Panaeva takes issue with this illusion of legal power as much as with the notion of 'fake' emancipation that liberates women but offers them no protection. As Belinskii's letters suggest, Panaeva herself had progressive ideas about estate management and was eager to put them into practice.[68]

The description of Anna's dwellings in St. Petersburg emphasizes the boundary between the two worlds: not just those that divide the rich from the poor, but those that women cross when they behave in a way that society does not condone. When Anna's mother falls pregnant, she becomes a stranger in the world she had previously inhabited. Later on, her illegitimate child also struggles to fit in and only finds peace at the end of the novel in Siberia, alongside other outcasts. The issue of illegitimacy is a constant concern voiced by the novel's narrator and could be seen almost as a metaphoric manifestation of a woman writer's concern of venturing onto her male colleagues' territory.

[68] V. G. Belinskii, 'Letter to I. I. Panaev from 19 August 1839', in *Pis'ma*, 3 vols (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1914), I (1914), p. 331. First published in I. I. Panaev. 'Vospominanie o Belinskom', *Sovremennik*, 1 (1860), 335-55.

The male characters in *Zhenskaia dolia* have almost unlimited control over all of the female characters. From the direct legal powers of a father, husband or serf-owner, to subtler ways of influence available to employers and leaders of society, what distinguishes a positive hero from a negative one is the way they use their power. Remarkably, all non-villainous male characters in the novel are symbolically or actually incapacitated. Sofiia's mentally ill brother-in-law or the helpful military invalid at the coaching inn are portrayed as non-threatening because of their disabilities whereas Snegov's exile effectively removes him from the active life.

It is obvious from the most dramatic scenes of the novel that Panaeva considers the power of love to be most destructive. The strongest hold male characters have on their lovers is emotional: Panaeva's heroines long for the love and approval of their fathers, lovers and husband, and are unable to shake off this need. Sofiia's unfailing faith in her philandering husband or the grandfather's older mistress's heart-breaking story of their romance tell a story of psychological rather than social or even financial dependency.

The author steers clear of the essentialist explanation that it is in the female nature to submit to such feelings. Instead, she explores the complex circumstances behind this imbalance such as the traditional ways in which societies function, the psychological (it is difficult to say no to love, she maintains), biological (women are perceived to age faster than men and lose their attractiveness) and cultural (men are perceived as sophisticated creatures of thought and women as basic beings) reasons behind the ease with which such power is exercised. The novel exposes the inadequacy of a female education that deliberately keeps women ignorant so that they are easier to control: 'все обрушивается на одну женщину, которую часто так воспитывают, что они не имеет и понятия о страшным последствиях

любви',[69] notes the narrator; 'с детства вам клали на голову свинцовые компрессы, чтобы не проникала никакая здравая мысль',[70] laments Anna.

The only women in control of their lives are those without social or financial constraints, such as Sofiia's husband's and father's demimonde mistresses, *loretki*. The mercantile nature of their relationship with men gives them an ultimate privilege in Panaeva's world of emotional torment: they seem to have no feelings for the men they are involved with.

In contrast to the complex characters of the society's female victims, the male characters in *Zhenskaia dolia* are developed only as far as the need to be in order to act as 'foils' for the heroines. Panaeva's heroes correspond to the character types 'imbued with fixed moral value', described by Cohen: the ideal man (Snegov) is opposed to a 'cold materialistic older man […] skilled in the ways of *le monde'* (Sofiia's father, Petr's grandfather) and a 'frankly corrupt seducer' (Petr, Lakotnikov), or a mix of the two (the old general).[71] In addition, Panaeva's novel showcases two particular types of villains. It contrasts a traditional figure of tyrannical male who revels in the power granted to him by society and personal wealth such as Petr's grandfather or Snegov's employer, the old general, to the new type of villain – a fake progressist.

Sofiia's husband Petr and her lover Lakotnikov are exposed as covert enemies of female emancipation. Frightening caricatures of modern enlightened men, these characters masquerade as progressive men only to use recent social advances in women's rights to their advantage. The character of Petr's aunt is an interesting amalgam of a typical female villain of the feminine social novel ('an older, corrupt

[69] Stanitskii, 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', p. 50.

[70] Stanitskii, 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' vtoraia. Okonchanie', p. 232.

[71] Cohen, 'In Lieu of a Chapter on Some French Women Realist Novelists', pp. 111-12.

woman embodying all that is shallow and empty')[72] and a female version of a fake progressive, Panaeva's personal bête noire. The novel's major rhetorical thrust is aimed precisely against this type of a contemporary villain.

The narrator's direct appeal to the reader follows soon after the opening scenes of the novel. The narrator proclaims the novel's projected 'sociomoral truth':

> Чего же вы можете ждать, бедные, честные женщины, в жизни? […] И не ждите ничего пока от эмансипации женщин! – Это проповедование также бесплодно, как и сострадание к человечеству, о котором так долго и бесплодно толкуют! И разве вы не видите, что женщина увлекавшаяся эмансипацией и отдавшаяся мужчине без всяких гражданских условий, – разве она не гибнет также в унизительном рабстве – и в придачу еще опозоренная! Поверьте, при разврате в обществе вам дают настолько свободы, чтобы без всяких жертв со стороны мужчин, вы служили бы минутным прихотям, а потом – также без всяких жертв – легко было и развязаться с вами![73]

As *Zhenskaia dolia* posits, female emancipation is necessary but essentially useless until it is fully acknowledged by society and codified in law. The ensuing tragic stories of women whose lives are ruined by buying uncritically accepting the false emancipation illustrate this thesis. The problem with the type of emancipation that makes victims out of the novel's characters is that it is defined by men. After Sonia's marriage, she becomes a member of an 'enlightened' household that is run according to ideas of progress and emancipation that, instead of liberating women, create another set of criteria by which to judge them. Jane Costlow maintains that the

[72] Ibid.

[73] Stanitskii, 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', pp. 50-51.

novel is concerned with 'women's victimization in upper-class marriage'[74] but the array of victimized female characters, including peasant women and house servants, as well as urban female professionals, suggests that the novel's spectrum is wider than that.

The victimization of the novel's heroines, and, in the case of Panaeva's self-conscious narrator, also of the addressees, has determining value for the remainder of the plot.[75] The proclamation of the socio-moral truth at the very beginning of the novel determines the narrative dynamic that tests the boundaries of the 'classic' realist narrative. Cohen, following Barthes, defines 'classic narrative' as a text where the hermeneutic and proairetic codes are 'in opposition, creating a tense forcefield where readerly suspense is produced and maintained', 'interpellat[ing] the reader through suspense and seduction'.[76] In the feminine social novel, instead of contrasting, the two codes reinforce each other. The function normally fulfilled by a hermeneutic code is transferred to the narratorial voice, which creates ample opportunities for metanarrative to emerge almost spontaneously.

This change significantly affects the novel's plot structure: 'rather than delays, jamming, and revelation, the privileged hermeneutic gestures in the feminine social novel are annunciation, emphasis, and repetition, sometimes with variation. Instantiating hermeneutic truth, the proairetic code is ruled by gesture of emphasis as well.[77] Indeed, the stories of suffering women all resemble each other the repetition is sometimes almost comical: most women are seduced/betrayed by the same man: Sofiia, Olimpiada and the young serf woman by Petr, Sofiia and Anna by

[74] Costlow, 'Love, Work, and the Woman Question in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing', p. 64.

[75] Cohen, 'In Lieu of a Chapter on Some French Women Realist Novelists', p. 96.

[76] Ibid., p. 94.

[77] Ibid., p. 96.

Lakotnikov, etc. The emphasis is achieved both through symbolic imagery and the narrator's emphatic rhetoric.

The narrative suspense in the generic feminine social novel and *Zhenskaia dolia* is created through the heroines attempts at 'modify[ing] the truth of women's suffering as she struggles against her victimized lot'.[78] Sofiia's attempt to find 'enlightened love' and Anna's stubborn defense of her independence are 'resistant actions', providing 'the closest equivalent in the feminine social novel to the paradoxical overcoding of the classic text'. The stories of Sofiia, Anna and the other victims 'constitute concrete examples proving the opening kernel of narrative truth'.[79] The effect these stories have on the reader is both emphatic and didactic.

This type of 'emphatic narrative overcoding' requires the author to construct a particular type of narrator, who assumes the function of a 'hermeneutic guide'. Typically for the feminine social novel, it is an 'omniscient, sentimental, voluble, moralizing, and exclamatory third-person narrator who […] is above all occupied with reiterating the content and the significance of the actions depicted, employing a variety of tropes of hyperbole, emphasis, and foreshadowing. […] Such foreshadowing helps generate the weak suspense previously described. How, the reader wonders, can the action to come possibly justify the hermeneutic build up it has received?'[80]

In keeping with this tradition, the narratorial voice in *Zhenskaia dolia* often manifests itself as a separate rhetorical entity when it personally bemoans the lot of the characters:

[78] Ibid., p. 97.

[79] Ibid., p. 98.

[80] Ibid., p. 97.

Все три женщины одинаково были несчастны. […] Зачем они так унижены, между тем как лицемерие и преступление окружены уважением и спокойствием? В этих случаях, у меня ум за разум заходит.'[81]

Panaeva's narrator delivers the thesis of sociomoral truth through a dialogue with a constructed 'reader', narrator's addressee:

И знаете почему? […] Чего же вы можете ждать, бедные, честные женщины в жизни? […] И не ждите ничего.… И разве вы не видите… Поверьте! […] … Но долго-долго еще придется тебе, любящая и честная женщина, лить слезы отчаяния… […] Долго придется вам, бедняжки-младенцы, умирать тысячами… да и что за жизнь ваша! Сколько оскорблений вы вытерпите! И неужели эти страдалицы не дождутся никогда от цивилизованного общества лучшей участи? […] Гордитесь же вы прогрессом в человечестве! Неужели вы не перестанете клеймить невинных детей позором их родителей![82]

Here, the addressee changes as the speech progresses: first, the narrator appeals to the loving, honest and, necessarily, weepy women, who need to see and believe his arguments (the invective 'Поверьте!' features four times in one passage). Then, it is their illegitimate children, condemned to a life of misery because of the notional character of the emancipation that gave women freedom but no protection. These 'poor babies' are warned that they will have to wait for a long time before civilized society will accept them. Then the narrator addresses society itself, which mistakenly

[81] Stanitskii, 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', p. 130.

[82] Ibid., pp. 51-52. And later on, in part three of the novel: 'Да, плачь, плачь, каждая женщина, если судьба обрекла тебя смолоду на одиночество. Никакой запас энергии не защитит тебя от грубых оскорблений эгоистов и развратников! Плачь, плачь о своей красоте, которая только усилит горе твоего одиночества, если ты не способна торговать ею…' N. Stanitskii [A. Ia. Panaeva], 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' vtoraia', *Sovremennik*, 4 (1862), 504-531(p. 529).

identifies progress with exhibitions of well-fed pets and artificial mushrooms. In a full rhetorical circle, the passage ends with a final appeal to the victims of society: vulnerable women and children.

Throughout the passage, the persona of the narrator becomes more defined: he is male, as Panaeva's chosen pen name 'N. Stanitskii' suggests, but very concerned with the issue of female emancipation. From the very beginning of her career as a published author, Panaeva adopted a male pen name. This meant, among other things, that she was a female writer whose narrators had an almost exclusively a male voice.

As Mary Zirin has noted, in 1860s 'the use of masculine, or gender-neutral, pseudonyms became common'.[83] Women writers in mid-nineteenth-century Russia tended to publish their works under male pseudonyms and were prepared to go to great lengths in order not to be exposed: a popular literary anecdote featured Nadezhda Khvoschinskaia asking Dmitrii Pisarev not to publish a review of her works in *Rassvet*, a journal for women, in order to keep her identity as 'V. Krestovskii' secret. Male pseudonyms created 'a barrier between private identity and public discourse'[84] and allowed women to be seen as writers rather than women writers specifically.

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the strategies used to constructing a self-conscious narrator in Chernyshevskii's and Pisemskii's texts. Here, the transgressive narratorial voice in *Zhenskaia dolia* is examined with reference to the specifics of the narrator-formation in the works of the women writers of the period. The type of transgression of gender boundaries in fiction that Panaeva has achieved

[83] Zirin, 'Women's Prose Fiction in the Age of Realism', p. 79.

[84] Ibid., p. 78.

in *Zhenskaia dolia* has been identified by scholars as 'narrative transvestism'. This term refers to narrative strategies aiming at gaining access to a voice on the other side of the structural divide between genders'[85] in order to overcome the 'constraints of gendered imaginations and gendered voices'.[86]

Remarkably, this type of narrator was already formed in Panaeva's earlier texts, particularly in her 1848 debut *Semeistvo Tal'nikovykh*. Natasha, the young protagonist of the novel, which relates the horrors of growing up in physically and psychologically abusive household, has a fluid individual identity. This identity freely merges with that of her siblings and 'anyone […] who suffers neglect and abuse in their household. The self Natasha intimates […] is fused with an abused, resourceful collective and keenly attuned to power relations and survival skills, not individual ambition and moral development.[87]

In a similar way, the 'I' of the narrator in *Zhenskaia dolia* merges with 'we' of the oppressed women. Grammatically, the author remained male and addressed male readers (as the gendered verb flexes indicate) but rhetorically he was aligning himself with the women whose cause he is arguing for. At the same time, the narrator wanted to make sure he is not perceived as someone who 'sees all men as villains'. His text is intended for the 'young men':

> И чтобы не приписали мне такого же взгляда, я должен оговориться, что я пишу этот роман для **юношей,** которые вступают только в общество, а потому, по неопытности, часто увлекаются рутинными, вредными понятиями о многих вещах, - тем более вредными, что эти понятия усвоены большинством. […] Живя с честным человеком,

[85] Kahn, *Narrative Transvestism*, p. 10

[86] Ibid., p. 8

[87] Holmgren, Gheith, 'Art and Prostokvasha: Avdot'ia Panaeva's Work', p. 132.

женщина не нуждается ни в каких законных правах, она под защитой его; но чуть она очутилась в руках **эгоиста**, она – жертва его прихотей и раба общественных условий. Чтобы окончательно оградить себя от нареканий **пристрастного защитника женщин**, я должен сказать, что **знаю** слишком много также страшных семейных драм, где страдают жестоко отцы во имя любви к детям… И все это честные люди, все это вам, бедным, надо выносить на своих плечах, чтоб легче было жить грязным, развратным **эгоистам**, которые готовы побить каменьями каждого отца, если он захочет воспитать свою дочь не куклой, а матерью будущих граждан.[88]

Defending the narrator's 'objective' position, this passage effectively places him/her in an undefined gender space. Panaeva's choice of a male pen name and a male narrative voice, put her in a vulnerable position as a realist narrator. On the one hand, adopting a male narratorial voice, she, as a woman, was 'borrowing the voice of authority'.[89] As Zirin noted, 'the identity of these authors might be an open secret in literary circles, but the names gave them an official male viewpoint from which to treat the broader society without being accused of infringing on a sphere beyound their ken.'[90]

On the other, if the narrator was authenticating the events of the narrative by claiming first-hand knowledge of same events ('знаю слишком много также страшных семейных драм').[91] The non-gendered narrative voice could invalidate

[88] Stanitskii, 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', p. 130.

[89] Kahn, *Narrative Transvestism,* p. 2.

[90] Zirin, 'Women's Prose Fiction in the Age of Realism', p. 79.

[91] Another authenticating strategy introduced 'authentic' documents such as Petr's and Lakotnikov's letters, exposing their true intentions: 'Я нахожу этот отрывок из переписки достаточным, как образчик красноречия Петра Васильевича ('Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', p. 73); 'Не

this strategy. The unavoidable division of readers into those who know the writer was a woman and those who do not created a space of gender ambivalence,[92] in which the same statements could be in interpreted in at least two different ways. Are we to trust the narrator because, as a woman, she has herself experienced the kind of suffering she portrays, or are we to respect the narrator's opinion because he is a man and, therefore, an objective distanced observer?

This ambivalence creats a certain sense of anxiety and provokes narrative self-reflection. In the passage quoted above, men and women (appealed to as a collective entity of 'poor, honest people') both suffer from a common enemy: 'dirty lascivious egoists'.[93] The appeals to the egoists' victims, both male and female, would continue throughout the novel as will the narrator's need to constantly clarify what he is saying ('должен оговориться'; 'Чтобы читатель не составил себе

подумайте, читатель, что тут скрывается мелкий расчет. […] Вот, читайте его письмо к одному дальнему его родственнику…' (Stanitskii, 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', p. 91); 'Доказательством […] может служить письмо его, посланное в то же утро на почту. Оно было написано к знакомому лицу для читателя…' (Stanitskii, 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' vtoraia. Okonchanie', p. 240).

[92] As Kahn points out, a defining feature of a narratorial transvestite self is its impermanence, as well as 'the transvestite's refusal to be defined by one gender or the other': the narratorial voice remains male and female at the same time. Kahn, *Narrative Transvestism,* pp. 10, 14.

[93] Panaeva's use of a term that is so integral for Chernyshevskii's theories has produced certain confusion, inspiring critics to claim that *Zhenskaia dolia* was influenced by *Chto delat'?*. (See, for example, A. I. Balandin's claim 'Она создала целую галерею женских образов – от забитых, сломленных жизненными обстоятельствами героинь (рассказы "Безобразный муж", 1848; "Жена часового мастера", 1849; "Необдуманный шаг", 1850, и др.) до "новых людей", воодушевленных идеями Н. Г. Чернышевского (роман "Женская доля", 1862).' A. I. Balandin, 'Panaeva A. Ia.: biobibliograficheskaia spravka' <http://az.lib.ru/p/panaewa_a_j/text_0020.shtml> [Accessed 20 August 2016]. In fact, such 'inspiration' is chronologically impossible: Panaeva's novel came out before Chernyshevskii's text was published. As a member of *Sovremennik*'s editorial board Panaeva would have had an opportunity to see the text before its publication but the dates still indicate that *Zhenskaia dolia* would have been completed earlier. *Zhenskaia dolia* did not polemicise with or put forward arguments in support of Chernyshevskii's ideas. Rather, the fact that Panaeva tackled the same problematic issues indicates her immersion in the discourse of contemporary political and social debate.

преждевременно невыгодного мнения […] , я поспешу предупредить его…’).[94] The same gender ambivalence that defines the persona of the narrator is extrapolated onto the image of the implied reader. The ostensibly male narrator addresses ostensibly male readers: ‘the young men’. At the same time, the addressee of the rhetorical appeals in the novel is often ‘a poor woman’ or a combined male/female victim. This raises the question of why the narrator opts not to address the female reader directly.

The problem with the female reader as an implied addressee is well illustrated by our previous case studies. The female reader is traditionally disparaged as emotional rather than rational, not interested in the serious implications of the text and, on the contrary, excited by cheap thrills. Most importantly, the female reader is portrayed as gullible. Chernyshevskii splits his audience into male and female and addresses them separately on the very first pages of his novel. Pisemskii reminds his readers what he expects from them in the last few lines of *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, that, he claimed, was written ‘not for sixteen-year old female readers and feeble minded young men’.[95]

Moreover, the mid-nineteenth-century Russian novels that deal with the woman question specifically reinforce the stereotype of the female reader as inferior.[96] Women writers ‘happily reproduced patronizing stereotypes’,[97] and exposing female readers as inadequate became a commonplace in Russian women’s

[94] Note, for example, the way in which the narrator addresses the ‘poor women’: ‘Ах вы, бедные женщины!’ but also in addressing the characters: ‘Бедное дитя!’ (referring to Sonia, ‘Zhenskaia dolia. Chast’ pervaia’, p. 58).

[95] *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, p. 549.

[96] For an array of examples from the works by mid- and late nineteenth-century women writers see, Dmitrii Ravinskii, ‘Pisatel’nitsy o chitatel’nitsakh’, p. 51-54.

[97] Ibid., pp. 52-53.

writing in the mid-nineteenth century. Emphasizing the maleness of his intended audience, Panaeva's narrator constructed an ideal reader: a young, impressionable man on whom this story can serve as a revelation and a call to action.

This supposed power of fictional narrative is a constant concern of Panaeva's narrator, who often addresses its influence on 'real life' [действительная жизнь]. Sofiia, we are told, loved 'fairytales' [волшебные сказки], so much so that it was very difficult to persuade her that her nanny's stories were not real. But why tell children that 'magic oddities don't exist in real life' [сказочные нелепости не существуют в действительной жизни], if they could explain the ills of contemporary society, asks the narrator? He then re-imagines social evils as something that could be explained by evil magic: money functioning as a magic wand, vanity having the same effect as 'dead' and 'alive' water, people becoming mute and dumb as fishes in the face of unfairness and the pain of others, etc.

Later on in the novel, the explanatory potential of fairytales is put to use in the scene of Anna's sojourn at a coaching inn:

> Путешественницу смотритель ввел в комнату с ковром, с шелковой мебелью, с теплым и чистым воздухом. Когда смотритель ушел, то путешественница уселась на диван и разглядывая комнату, думала, что она теперь походит на сказочную героиню, которая по щучьему веленью, из хижины переносится во дворец. Ну, а в действительной жизни, на станциях, только генеральское приказание творит такие чудеса.[98]

These passages showcase Panaeva's underargument concerning relative validity of different types of realist narration. In the scene at the coaching inn, Anna

[98] 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' vtoraia', p. 526.

as a focalizer is interpreting reality in terms of 'magic oddities', recalling modes of narrative that are not reliant on credibility and authentication. The narratorial voice, however, re-conceptualizes the same events in the framework of 'real life', governed by issues of class, power and social order, as behooves a realist narrative. This contrast creates a particular type of metafictional tension, not immediately apparent at other points of the narrative.

Together with the inadequate education, it is literary fiction that is responsible for propagating harmful illusions: 'У нас в голове все романы да рыцари!', [99] the narrator accuses his readers. The contrast between the 'novels' and 'actual life' is constantly emphasised: 'В романах можно так рассуждать, но не в жизни…'[100]; Sofia, though well-read, 'многого еще не понимала в этой действительной, грязной жизни'.[101]

Panaeva's narrator reflects on several aspects of realist narratives that have been specifically criticized as typical defects of women's writing. One of them is character description and her focus on this particular feature is not arbitrary. The nature of realist description, including the description of characters, is a problematic aspect of women's writing: for instance, it forms a basis of Khvoshchinskaia's reflections on realism as well as features in Cohen's examination of a problem of a 'light touch' characterization, typical for the feminine social novel.[102]

The narrator in *Zhenskaia dolia* often uses a particular rhetorical strategy: he admits to not having done something that should be accomplished in a realist narrative, but then, as if pressured by readers, does it in the end: 'Однако, я ничего

[99] 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', p. 102.

[100] Ibid., p. 104

[101] Ibid., p. 116.

[102] Cohen, 'In Lieu of a Chapter on Some French Women Realist Novelists', pp. 112-16.

не сказал о наружности Григория Андреевича, ни о его госте. Признаюсь, я не мастер списывать паспортные портреты моих героев и героинь. Пожалуй, можно описать каждую морщинку на лице Григория Андреевича, - но что толку, если для читателя он все-таки останется выцветшим дагерротипным портретом? Но так и быть: скажу кратко об их наружности'.[103] Or, later on: 'О наружности Лакотникова могу сказать определительно только, что это был видный мужчина…'[104] This 'descriptive restraint', featured in *Zhenskaia dolia*, serves a particular function in the feminine social novel: it directs the reader's attention from the character's outer appearance to the workings of his/her heart. In this passage, the issue of over-doing or under-doing detailed descriptions – often featured in discussions and value judgements on women's prose – is debated. This direct answer to criticism is not the only form of engagement with contemporary literary and critical paratexts in *Zhenskaia dolia* – literary parody is used throughout the novel as a form of metanarrative.

Panaeva often veers into a narrative mode that parodies Gogolesque satire. For example, in Part One, Panaeva's narrator paints a parodic picture of alternative 'golden times' and then returns to 'realistic' description. The narrator starts his monologue with a question: 'Случалось ли моему читателю встречаться с художественными натурами?' [105] He then paints a sarcastic picture of the artistic natures exemplified in Sonia's dissipated husband Petr, and how they are underestimated by everyone except impressionable self-educated youths [юноши-самоучки].[106] A 'golden time of true appreciation' will come for them, predicts the

[103] 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', p. 61.

[104] 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' vtoraia', p. 211.

[105] 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', p. 86.

[106] Ibid.

narrator, and describes this alternative golden future, in which these artistic natures are revered: 'Я замечтался о золотом времени!'[107]

His treatment of this alternative development, is, however, completely different to the rest of the text, as a 'textual parod[y] of conventional literary discourses' that 'is recognizably out of place'.[108] The stylistic reference could not be clearer: the paragraph ends with a direct mention of Gogol''s play, *Revizor*: 'Это все так приятно, так трогательно, что в то время, как я пишу эти строки, сам не знаю отчего – но слезы так вот рекой и льются […] [как] у жены смотрителя в "Ревизоре"'.[109] Equally, the narrator's self-consciousness often manifests in satirical asides: Однако что я делаю! – передаю грубое воззрение злого лакея на жизнь благороднейших людей![110] Such remarks excplitely use the mode's performative potential. [111]

In another example, the satirical narrator styles himself as a voice of reason and a speaker for the underprivileged, in a parodic reference to Pushkin's poetic descriptions of Russian winter:

> …мороз заметно усиливался. Наши поэты вообще часто воспевали прелесть русской зимы; а наши патриоты, проживающие в Италии или в Париже большую часть своей жизни, восторгаются трескучими морозами, которым мудрые мужи приписывают мощь тела и духа русского человека. Я согласен, что мороз придает бодрость тому, что, целую ночь просидев за ужином, на другое утро встал с туманной

[107] Ibid., p. 89.

[108] Peters, *Feminist Metafiction and the Evolution of the British Novel*, p. 2.

[109] 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', pp. 89-90.

[110] 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' pervaia', p. 94.

[111] For more on the performative and self-reflexive potential of satire, see Jean Weisgerber, 'Satire and Irony as Means of Communication', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 10 (1973), 152-71 (p. 163).

головой, - он, разумеется, пройдясь по морозу освежится настолько, что почувствует силу снова провести также и следующую ночь. Поверю также, что русская зима имеет приятность для тех, кто, закутавшись в собольи и медвежьи шубы, промчится на рысаках после длинного обеда в оперу. Согласен, что может быть есть поэзия в морозе и для того, кто скачет на лихой тройке с сотенного пикника. Но сомневаюсь, чтобы мороз придавал бодрость духа и тела ямщику, сидящему на козлах.[112]

Here, the narrator wants his readers to visualize a concrete coachman ('посмотрите, как он съежился в своем дырявом армячишке'[113]). The miserable conditions in which the coachmen have to work are shocking, but the only passenger who is appalled is a young woman – sarcastically, the narrator notes that the only reason why she is bothered is her female sentimentality ('она только по женской чувствительности не разделяла того мудро-спокойного мнения, что все нипочем русскому мужику'[114]). Here, in a rhetorical trick, privileged appreciation of the Russian winter, gentle to the rich and cruel to the poor, is contrasted with a female sensibility, thus equating male sensibility with cruelty. Panaeva's satire is aimed at multiple targets: on the one hand, it attacks the narrative of social privilege. On the other, through equating privilege with masculinity, it highlights the similarities between victims of social and gender discrimination.

Sometimes a sarcastic reverie or a genuine alarmist monologue is checked by the narrator's self-awareness: 'Достаточные столичные жители, как мне кажется, вместо сердца, имеют кусочки мамонтовой кожи… Впрочем я увлекся, осуждая равнодушие столичных жителей к беззащитным женщинам и детям.

[112] 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' vtoraia. Okonchanie', pp. 503-04.

[113] Ibid., p. 504.

[114] Ibid., p. 507.

Они иногда бывают очень чувствительны в театрах и проливают обильные слезы…'; [115] or 'Надеюсь, читатель не осудит [Лакотникова] за такую невинную слабость, особенно когда видит, что в этом человеке соединялось столько замечательных добродетелей…';[116] or, for example: 'Ведь в самом деле читатель, молодость, положим, вещь хорошая, но зрелые года, согласитесь сами, все-таки лучше'.[117] This type of self-aware narrative commentary actively involves the reader into the process of interpreting the text and establishes a shared experience of narration by using metafictional cues.

The boundaries of realist discourse and the structure of narrative are debated in the concluding chapter of the novel: 'Если так принято, чтобы автор заканчивал свой роман подробным отчетом, что и как продолжают существовать главные лица, то я должен это сделать',[118] reflects the narrator of Panaeva's novel. In a final reflection on the accepted structures of realistic narrative, the narrator once again conceives of himself as a rhetorical entity capable of objectively evaluating his own narrative. Carrying on with the rhetorical strategy he initiated earlier in the novel, he first questions but then ultimately follows the realist tradition of narrative closure, providing the account of Anna's, Snegov's, Sofiia's and Lakotnikov's lives.

This employmnt of rhetorical 'underarguments' with realist poetics, carried out throughout the novel, becomes its major metafictional preoccupation. Panaeva's narrator is reflecting on his own struggles to accommodate his style to the demands of contemporary realist prose. As a result, the reader is often offered a running commentary on the issue the narrator is trying to solve: over/under descriptions of characters, the constraints of gendered narrative voices, realistic authentication of the

[115] Ibid., p. 531-32.

[116] 'Zhenskaia dolia. Chast' vtoraia', p. 211.

[117] Ibid., p. 210.

[118] Ibid., p. 249.

events of the plot, the creation of narrative suspense and the dualogue with ideologically divided audiences.

The struggle against the dominant literary aesthetics is manifested on the structural and discoursive levels of the text. As a subject of metanarrative, it mirrors the novel's ideological preoccupation with the woman question and the problems of female emancipation. The narrative voice in *Zhenskaia dolia* is challenging the constraints of dominant contemporary aesthetical and political narratives, testing their boundaries and looking for opportunities for those brave enough to explore them.

4. Conclusion

Zhenskaia dolia had been defined primarily as a novel on the subject of the women's question and read in the historical and ideological context of political debates of the 1860s. Despite the presence of a narrative voice that self-consciously tested the aesthetic, ideological and gender boundaries of contemporary literary discourse, the novel has never been approached as an example of feminist metafiction.

The close reading offered in this chapter analyses the rhetoric of narrative self-consciousness in *Zhenskaia dolia*, showcasing the transgressive nature of the novel's narrative voice. Panaeva's narrator occupies an ambivalent transgressive position and, oscillating between the male voice of authority and female voice of empathy, utilizes the narrative potential of both. The presumed reader's gender identity is equally fluid and inclusive: the text proclaims itself to be intended for the moral improvement of young men, and yet addresses all victims of life's unfair lot irrespective of their gender.

This ambivalence generates instances of narratorial self-reflection, questioning traditional principles of realist narration and the constraints they place on the writers depending on their gender. The structural and stylistic elements of narrative which are traditionally associated with women's writing, such as characterization, plotting, imagery and the rhetoric of empathy, in are transformed *Zhenskaia dolia* 'into subversive and interactive forms that contest […] historical convention'.[119]

The comparison with the French feminist social novel exposes the basic narrative structure of *Zhenskaia dolia*, which allows for the introduction of metafictional elements into the novel's ostensibly realist poetics. What seems unusual in the context of the Russian literary scene of the 1860s, appears as a shared narrative strategy of a particular type of women's writing. Similar across European national literary traditions, it appears in women's novelistic fiction when the debates on realist aesthetics become fused with the discourse of gender dominance and submission.

As a text of the woman question with overt instances of metanarrative, *Zhenskaia dolia* is a case of feminist metafiction of the 1860s. Imbued with the literary concerns of the period, *Zhenskaia dolia* addressed the same questions of the realist aesthetics and ideological potential of literary fiction as the other two novels discussed in this study but approached them through a different type of narrative strategy. By following the rhetorical thrusts of the novel's narrative voice, we can re-trace Panaeva's strategy of negotiating a literary 'realist position without losing whatever benefits her gender might confer'.[120]

[119] Kahn, *Narrative Transvestism,* p. 37.
[120] Cohen, 'In Lieu of a Chapter on Some French Women Realist Novelists', p. 134.

Conclusion

My analysis of nineteenth-century Russian metafiction is based on the twentieth-century theory of metafiction in its universal configuration, stripped of the specifics of national literary canons. In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to demonstrate the dissemination through mid-1860s Russian novels of this narrative technique, and to argue for its constitutive importance for Russian literature and the theory of realism.

Ever since a working definition of metafiction had been formulated in the second half of the twentieth century, it has been possible to apply the interpretative framework of this theory to literary texts from any historical period, as long as they demonstrate narrative self-consciousness. Uniting different fields of study by the use of a similar methodology, it served to illuminate ties between specific historical and social circumstances and their universal representation in narratives. Precisely such a synchronic approach has been practiced in the studies of metafiction in the recent years, including this thesis.

My introduction contextualised the idea of metanarrative within the Russian novelistic tradition and identified the problems of its integration into the field of studies of nineteenth-century Russian literature. The Russian novelistic tradition started out as a self-conscious appropriation of a foreign literary form used to describe native reality, and an attempt to create a narrative that was both nationally specific and culturally universal. Self-conscious literary techniques continued to be a dominant trait in Russian novels as the genre developed further in the nineteenth century, as exemplified by *Evgenii Onegin, Dead Souls* and *Hero of Our Time*.

Moreover, I have argued that, with the advent of realism as the dominant literary aesthetic in the second half of the nineteenth century, self-consciousness did

not go into eclipse in Russian fiction, but remained a constant presence. An assumption to the contrary was based on a reductionist understanding of realism and a view of Russian novel-writing as purely imitative. Therefore, I suggested a revision of our idea of what Russian realism was, acknowledging its capacity to include metafictional elements.

Chapter 1 of the present work examined Chernyshevskii's 1863 novel *Chto delat'?*. *Chto delat'?* was conceived as a vehicle for political ideas but in the end also presented an example of a kind of fiction that Chernyshevskii promoted as a literary critic. Chernyshevskii's philosophical concern with the problem of the ontology of literary fiction was reflected in his choice of narrative strategies: the use of a highly self-conscious narrative voice, constantly exposing the artificial and constructed nature of the relayed narrative; and a purposefully maintained sense of ontological ambiguity, obvious in the undefined ontological status of the novel's characters, plot and the narrator himself. In this chapter, I have analysed the fundamental connection between Chernyshevskii's views on the ontology of literary fiction and his experiments with it in his novel. Having outlined Chernyshevskii's views on the relationship between literary fiction and reality, my study determined which narrative strategies he used to communicate these views to his readers. A close reading of the novel's metafictional passages exposed parallels between Chernyshevskii's narratorial voice in his articles and his literary fiction. A discussion of the metadiegetic aspects of the novel and its narrator, and a close reading of the novel's multiple metalepses, has highlighted an underlying structure of metanarrative in *Chto delat'?*. In chapter 1, I have aimed to demonstrate how approaching Chernyshevskii's novel as metafiction offers new insights into the text's overanalysed poetics as well as into the Russian literary scene of the period.

In the 1860s, the blurred boundaries between aesthetics and ideology meant that ideological and philosophic enquiries found their way into fiction through the use of narrative self-consciousness. Chapter 2 of my study examined the philosophical queries into the ontology of fiction and political thought in *Vzbalamuchennoe more*, Alexei Pisemskii's polemic novel. A master of detailed, almost forensic, descriptions, Pisemskii won his place in the Russian literary canon because of his naturalist *ocherki* from contemporary life. And yet, in 1863 he published a novel in which the polemic thrust of an anti-nihilist argument was interspersed with reflections on the nature of fiction and even featured a narrator entering his own story and conversing with his fictional characters.

In this chapter, I have offered a close reading of Pisemskii's enquiries into the nature of fiction and ideology and analysed them in the context of his understanding of literary realism as an aesthetic system. Focussing on the episode of the novel that featured an ontologically transgressive narrator, I examined the frame-breaking and non-frame-breaking metalepses in *Vzbalamuchennoe more* and studied their function in the overall structure of the novel. Subverting an established literary tradition of omniscience, Pisemskii's maverick narrator fashioned an image of an author that would not seem out of place among self-consciously Romantic texts of decades earlier or among modernist meta-novels decades later. Its publication in the 1860s remains a curious phenomenon that challenges our assumptions about the predominantly mimetic nature of the Russian Realist tradition.

Avdot'ia Panaeva's novel *Zhenskaia dolia*, as well as her other works of fiction, was published under a male pseudonym, Nikolai Stanitskii. Nonetheless, it featured a woman's perspective on the same issues of verisimilitude and didacticism in realist narratives that have occupied the other two writers whose texts are analysed

in this study. In chapter 3, I used the critical apparatus behind the study of feminist metafiction to establish the specifics of Panaeva's narrative strategies.

Constrained by the social conventions that did not encourage women's participation in public debates, Panaeva put forward her thoughts on female emancipation, the power of imaginative literature, and the privileged point of view of traditional realist narratives, in a series of meta-observations or 'underarguments', integrated into the novel's narrative. The issue of the masculinisation of the aesthetics of nineteenth-century literary realism is widely discussed in the scholarship on English and French novels but it remains a topic of marginal interest in the Russian literary studies. A close reading of the passages in *Zhenskaia dolia* focussed on the novel's transgressive narrator and his/her struggles against the boundaries of traditional gender roles. In chapter 3, I have presented analysis of *Zhenskaia dolia* as feminist metafiction and a feminine social novel, leading to a discussion of the issues of narrative agenda and dominance that played out in the novel's plot and rhetoric.

Metafiction often presents itself in the form of a novel because of that genre's tendency for introspection and dialogism. Literary works, as 'specific form[s] of philosophic thought in the broad sense',[1] have the capacity to explore – discursively – ideas that are of interest to philosophy. The literary origins of the problematisation of the ontology of fiction can be traced to the insights of Cervantes, whose 'critical-philosophical' awareness preceded Descartes's 'methodological skepticism'.[2] In a

[1] Gary Saul Morson, *Narrative and Freedom: Shadows of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 4. Morson further elaborates on Bakhtin's understanding that 'some of the greatest discoveries of world thought have taken place first, and sometimes, exclusively, in the visualisation of artistic form' (Ibid., p. 87).

[2] Robert Alter, *Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. x.

sense, the novel as a genre gained its unique introspective status through a critique of reality that was nevertheless expressed in a form that strove to achieve a recognisable mimetic representation.

It is therefore not surprising that metafiction as a narrative strategy tends to peak in the periods when the novel is rapidly developing, which is often mistaken for a crisis of the genre. In fact, these are the periods when novels are reinvented. Not every work of literature written in the mid-1860s contained metafictional elements (it would be equally fair to say that not every text produced in the 1970s and 1980s exemplified metafictional poetics), but our findings prove that the metafictional tradition in Russia remained strong throughout the nineteenth century and at times became dominant, as in the mid-1860s.

Naturally, the postmodernist (essentially poststructuralist) awareness of reality as a linguistic construct cannot be retrospectively imposed on any of the authors whose works are the object of this study. However, the peculiar fusion of ideological *Bildungsroman* and political *Künstlerroman*, for which the three novels analysed in this study can serve as representative examples, was a consequence of the specific intellectual atmosphere of the period. The abolition of serfdom, the wide-ranging social reforms, the final emergence of the *intelligentsia* as a distinct social group, and the prevalence of new forms of cultural production all contributed to the emergence of a heightened ideological self-awareness in this period.

Understanding the complex cultural processes of the long 1860s is of particular importance to contemporary Russian studies. The historical and social circumstances of the period did not only provide a conducive environment in which the inherently self-conscious nature of the Russian novel could be nurtured; they also forged a tradition in which any literary piece claiming to be truly literary had to be

politically self-aware. As a result, modern Russian literature constantly questions its ontological status by measuring itself against the previous tradition of obligatory involvement with politics. The application of the theoretical framework of metafiction to the corpus of 1860s political novels challenges our assumptions about this most persistent of Russian literature's characteristic traits, re-examining its origins.

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